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CARR OF CARRLYON BY HAMILTON AÏDÉ.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

"Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children."

EXODUS XX. V. 5.

CARR OF CARRLYON:

A NOVEL,

BY

HAMILTON AÏDÉ,

AUTHOR OF "RITA," ETC. ETC.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LEIPZIG

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

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BIBLIOTHECA
REGIA
MONACENSIS.

PART I.

CASA LAMBERTI.

CARR OF CARRLYON.

CHAPTER I.

One rainy evening in November, 1847, a post calèche, drawn by three steaming horses, drew up at the gate of Bologna, on the road from Modena. The leather curtains, which, on account of the rain, had been fastened close, were drawn aside, and in answer to the official demand for a *passaporto*, the head of a fair young man, in a travelling-cap, was thrust forward. This was followed by the keen eyes and black beard of another who had been asleep in the opposite corner, and who now, starting up suddenly, unfastened a leather bag, which was slung round his neck, and produced from it a pocket-book, which he handed to the officer. He followed this proceeding by jumping out himself; and while the Italian soldier held up his lantern, and slowly spelt the gilt superscription on the passport cover, "The Honourable Laurence Carr," the courier — for such he was — urged him with volubility, and a yet more persuasive silver argument, to be expeditious. The document was transferred — possibly with another silver argument — to the hands of a superior officer

in the guard-house, while the courier and his friend held a colloquy under the archway. How had they made the journey from Modena? Was there anything fresh concerning the banditti, since the diligenza was stopped and robbed two nights ago? *Sicuro* . . . a poor devil, *un certo fattore*, riding home from market last night, was killed; at least, so they told us in Modena, where we stopped a couple of hours. "*Per Bacco*, if the patrol catch them —." But the patrol is not likely to catch them, thinks the courier, apparently, by his incredulous smile, and his "chè, chè, chè."

The authorities being now satisfied that the traveller was not a conspirator, or a spy, or any other dangerous character, but simply "un signore Inglese, viaggiando per il suo piacere," the passport was returned, one tattoo the more on its battered face; and the postilion, urging his weary horses on, with a cric-crac, they rattled under the city gateway, and up the dim arcaded streets, to the Hotel San Marco.

There was a fair in Bologna; and, in addition to this, some great festa, I forget what, had crowded the inns with Italians, mostly from the Romagna — come in, probably, to combine a little biennial business and pleasure. At none of the principal hotels was there a bed to be had; and the calèche went groaning uneasily up one street and down another, the postilion's jovial cric-crac sounding at last the most melancholy satire on that weary convoy. The

horses slid and stumbled on over the stones, and the postilion shouted and invoked all his most familiar saints, but it was not until they had been repulsed at so many doors, that Laurence began to contemplate the frightful probability of passing the night inside the calèche, that they stopped before a dirty-looking Locanda where a vacant room was to be had.

When I state that Laurence Carr had been somewhat luxuriously brought up; that he was considerably self-indulged, and that he had made up his mind to spend some days, at least, in Bologna, it will not be thought surprising that he should take a jaundiced view of travelling in general, and of Bologna in particular, as he followed the padrone moodily upstairs, looking with disgust into every unsavoury corner, which the flaring candle in the padrone's hand revealed. It was in vain that his valuable Giuseppe pointed out, very reasonably, that they were lucky to get in anywhere. His master declined this or other comforts of a like description; and exercised his privilege as an Englishman of grumbling at everything. At another moment he might have smiled at the novel aspect of affairs, and seen their picturesque side, for he had that valuable capacity; but not now. He only felt tired, cold, and disgusted.

He had to reach his room by a wooden gallery which ran round the courtyard upon the second floor, and then the padrone, drawing forth a key, unlocked

a door, and hoped, with pride, that the signore was *contento*. A room — hear it not, spirits that dwell among the quilted curtains of Laurence's bedroom at Carrlyon — a room devoid of curtain, carpet, blind! Walls, once whitewashed, now stained and much written over (for the custom is *not* peculiarly English); a diminutive deal table, on which stood a diminutive slop-basin and bottle of water, with an absurd napkin, supposed to serve as a towel, in consistency like a piece of blotting-paper; this, with one rush-bottomed chair, formed the entire furniture, besides the bed. The latter article was constructed, with primitive simplicity, of a bundle of Indian corn, in white, tossed on the top of another bundle in blue.

Carr looked ruefully round him. There was fortunately a grate; and on his expressing a wish for some fire, the *donna di facenda* came and plucked a handful of Indian corn out of the bed, to light one. Feeling exceedingly hungry, he then descended into the *sala*, in search of food, while Giuseppe was looking after the luggage, and paying the postilion. A plate of something that looked like lamp-oil, in which floated sundry little stars, adroitly cut out of tallow candle, to judge by the taste, was first brought to him. This was followed by a dish of *salame*, more familiar to our ears as Bologna sausage, and a *frittura*, none of which Carr was yet sufficiently Italianized to eat with satisfaction to himself. A *lucerna*, or three-wicked lamp, was the only light:

it stood in the centre of the table, upon which libations of wine and oil had been liberally poured, together with parings of bread and cheese, the remains of the afternoon meal. A couple of farmers at one end were discussing their day's bargains in pigs and cattle, over a dish of *polenta* and a flask of red wine. A commercial traveller, at the other, with his glazed leather pack resting on the wall beside him, sat smoking over the *Monitore Toscano*, — a grimy copy, the flaccid folds of which could not be induced, by any persuasion, to stand upright. These were the only occupants of the sala; but the padrona, wafting in with her a strong flavour of garlic, kept coming and going, locking and unlocking a cupboard, which seemed to Carr to be a very Noah's Ark of domestic economy, only that there was but little order in the arrangement of the miscellaneous articles, and that they certainly were not in pairs. The padrona was slip-shod, and attired in a sort of bedgown, tied round the waist by an apron, and a bunch of keys. She had a great basket of splendid black hair, very ill-kept, with a silver bodkin run through it; and the glimpses of linen, promiscuously afforded about her person, were none of the whitest.

Having satisfied the first cravings of hunger, and after making these observations, the young traveller arrived at the conclusion that even his own cell, with a fire and a pair of candles, was better than the sala, and he retired accordingly. Here, in the luxury of dressing-gown and slippers, with his des-

patch-box open on the rickety table before him, he sat down to begin a letter to his mother, and felt almost comfortable in the pleasure of detailing his discomforts to that sympathizing correspondent.

We will take this opportunity, instead of letting the reader work on in the dark through several chapters, to introduce in a more formal manner an individual who plays a prominent part in the following pages. We all know what a comfort it is if our friend, when he asks us to take a perfect stranger in to dinner, gives us the merest sketch or hint of that stranger's family or antecedents. It not only saves us from running on a shoal of dangerous subjects: it often serves as a key to the whole tone of thought and feeling, and elucidates many a casual remark, which would otherwise pass unheeded. This last argument is so applicable to the case of the strangers whom we never see, whose looks and intonations of voice our imagination has to supply, and only the faintest transcript of whose words, jotted down, or remembered long afterwards, can be reproduced for us on paper, that any digression which brings such a stranger more fully before us, needs no apology.

Laurence Carr, though five-and-twenty, was not yet entirely his own master; but he was heir to broad lands and an ancient barony; and he was an only child. As such, the best had invariably been done to spoil him, and in many ways, it must be confessed, the system had succeeded. From his

earliest childhood he had been indulged in every whim, and nothing but the wholesome antidote of Eton and Oxford prevented his being insupportably self-sufficient. But — let the nice distinction be appreciated — this did not prevent his having a considerable amount of vanity, which, indeed, was an inheritance. Perhaps, in reality, he seldom thought well of himself; but, certainly, he had an inordinate desire to be thought well of. Endowed with more than average abilities, and, above all, with artistic and poetical feeling, yet lacking the creative power to produce what he so keenly enjoyed, he had passed from boyhood into manhood, hearing it repeated that he was a genius who was to burst upon the world some day, though in what shape was not yet quite decided. His father was anxious that it should be in oratory; and looked upon the "House" and a hunt-dinner as the legitimate fields for display in the son of an old Tory lord. Unfortunately, Laurence's first attempt at public speaking — it was at a large county meeting — failed signally, and his vanity was too much wounded upon that occasion to permit him to repeat the experiment. He resisted his father's desire that he would stand for the county, at the last election, which took place about a year after Laurence left Oxford, urging that he had no taste for politics and no gift of eloquence. Lady Carrlyon, on the other hand, was anxious her son should adopt a diplomatic career, but Laurence's education had been that of most other college-bred British

youths, and at one-and-twenty he was by no means at ease in a protracted French conversation. He was quite sensible of his own deficiencies, and had the good sense to feel that without considerable study he was unfit for the career his mother urged on him. Thus a year or two rolled by, and the period at which we introduce Laurence to the reader's notice had arrived, and he was still, in common phraseology, "doing nothing." His mother, who, upon the strength of having known Lord Byron and Sir Walter Scott in the days of her youth, imagined that she had literary tastes, thought it would not be amiss if her son devoted some of his spare time — when not better employed — to writing. Certain juvenile effusions of Laurence's were kept in a cabinet in her ladyship's boudoir, and had been freely circulated in a distinguished circle during the young gentleman's boyhood. Now, whenever they were adverted to, her ladyship observed, with a sigh, "Ah! if he *chose*, he could write such beautiful things!" Why he did *not* choose, no one perhaps clearly understood; but among her ladyship's friends, at all events, a belief in the capacity generally existed.

Thus Laurence Carr may be said to have enjoyed a prospective sort of reputation. How long he would be able to exist upon this capital was doubtful; but with a handsome, intelligent face and extremely agreeable manners, it was hard if it could not carry him on for a few years. He was impetuous and impatient of control; but, then, very little con-

trol had been exercised over him. His father was a weak, good-natured, fox-hunting old gentleman, double his mother's age, whom both mother and son, on most points, twisted round their fingers with careless facility. Lady Carrlyon, as may be imagined, was not so easily dealt with; but from having, in his boyhood, made an idol of her son, she began to find in him, as he reached man's estate, some of that inexorable quality, associated in our minds with the objects of heathen-worship. It was not that, like some other young men, he called on his mother to supply the deficiencies of an extravagant purse. Laurence never was extravagant, and his father gave him a liberal allowance. His tastes were not vicious. They were luxurious, indolent, and refined. He had very few secrets from his mother; but he understood her thoroughly, and exercised an unlimited sway over her. This being so, it was his misfortune, and not his fault, that he could not feel much filial respect for that foolish and worldly-minded woman, always intriguing for something (latterly it was that her son should make a great marriage), and so cruel-tongued as regarded her own sex. Laurence had the good taste to feel annoyed whenever these characteristics of his lady-mother came prominently forward. Whatever his faults were — and, besides those I have hinted at, there were others many and serious — he was entirely free from this vulgarity of mind. He had a good deal of family pride, it is true, but this only made him profoundly indifferent

to the social position of others. His kindly nature, and that weak desire to please everyone I have already named, rendered him the most popular man of his college. Then, as to money, he was ignorant of everything concerning it, and clearly would never make a man of business. He had an allowance sufficient for all his wants, and some day or other he would inherit a large landed property and a tolerable fortune. In the meantime nothing could be more repugnant to him than the bare idea of marrying for money, or for anything else but love. One after another of those noble or wealthy maidens who were decoyed into the country by that ambitious lady-mother had been bowed away by the indignant heir-apparent, as soon as he perceived the scheme. It was no use. Her ladyship might have spared herself the trouble. And in the matter of guests at Carrlyon, Master Laurence grew more domineering every year. Last Christmas he actually insisted upon the little apothecary's wife and her plain daughter being invited. Why, such a thing never had been heard of! — as Lady Carrlyon remarked. Still more galling to that noblewoman's feelings, however, was it when her son positively threatened to go up to London and spend his Christmas there, if a certain Lady Arabella King and her husband, very far off neighbours, were not bidden to the house. Touching this lady, a very painful story, dating many years back, was told, and *had* been told with great amplification during all these years

by Lady Carrlyon. Her son chose to disbelieve the story; and then being worsted by her ladyship's eloquence, took up the absurd and untenable ground, that as Lady Arabella had been pardoned by her husband, and had subsequently conducted herself like a good and faithful wife, the case against her should be considered as "not proven," and that she should not be hunted away from all respectable society. As the lady had never before been invited to Carrlyon, it increased the difficulties of the case; but the Idol was inexorable, and his victim had to yield, with the best grace she could.

Laurence, on his introduction to London society, met with what the French call great success. He was made love to, and made love at; and Lady Carrlyon had her natural solicitudes that he would be caught by some manœuvring mamma. But, though submitting willingly enough to be made a great deal of by a number of pretty women, Laurence seemed to preserve himself tolerably heart-whole, and, at the end of three or four seasons, had not had one very serious flirtation. What *was* serious was the unavoidable result of this life of constant excitement upon his character and habits. He had started with some vague idea of fitting himself by application for the diplomatic career his mother wished him to follow. In the ceaseless round of society from town to country houses, yachting, shooting, and what not besides, he soon found anything

like study impossible. He was passionately fond of painting; but, somehow or other, he "never found time" to do anything but caricatures of his friends smoking round the billiard-table or, picnicing upon the moors. He had aspirations after better things; and this might almost be said to be his misfortune. Had he been entirely commonplace, he would have been more humble and more contented with the extremely luxurious round hole Society had provided for him. As it was, there were edges which made him feel that he *might* have been a square peg, if he was not actually one; and he had just sufficient energy to feel dissatisfied with the aimless existence he led, and not enough to abandon it for a more brave and manly one.

Three or four years elapsed: and though his friends still "believed" in him, and the best circles were unanimous in declaring him to be "so very talented," the shrewd few discerned that Laurence Carr would never really do much; and among those few the very first to make this discovery was himself. He was for a short time secretary to a man high in office; but the party only remained in a few months, and Lady Carrlyon's brilliant anticipations for her son all fell to the ground. He had not, indeed, much aptitude for business, but he could write a very good letter. Unfortunately, however, his extreme sensitiveness to forms and shades of expression rendered his, anything but the pen of a ready writer;

and it is possible that his chief would have been better satisfied with a less refined and a more rapid and industrious scribe.

As yet, singular to say, Laurence Carr had been very little on the Continent. A summer in Switzerland, a few weeks at Baden and Paris, and a yachting cruise to the Mediterranean, was the extent of his foreign travel. But he was now entering his twenty-fifth year; and with a feeling of weariness and disgust, at the end of a long London season, he resolved to throw up all his country engagements for the next six months, and betake himself to Italy and Greece. The moors, and Scotch hospitality, with a blooming maiden at every door to greet him — England's patriarchal covers, with that long round of country houses, full of these London faces, of which he was, oh! so sick — Carrlyon, with his mother's rampart of eligible young ladies round him — he would forego them all. Yes! and he should probably remain away a year, or perhaps much longer, in a sort of Childe Harold's pilgrimage; and he would really study painting, and see something of foreign life and society, and give up English people for a time.

So he said. But Lady Carrlyon did not believe a word of it. She considered his going abroad a great waste of time, when he might be "improving his connection" at home; but she was sure he must soon tire of wandering about in that uncomfortable sort of way', and Christmas at all events would find

him back again. But any opposition, she knew, would act detrimentally to her wishes; so she busied herself in getting him letters to "the best people" in the places where Laurence talked of staying any time. Among these letters was one which it gave her some trouble to obtain. Partly on account of its renowned school of painting and the riches of its gallery; partly because he heard it was essentially Italian, and that there were no English residents there — Laurence had fixed on Bologna as a halting-place where he might possibly remain some weeks. The difficulty of finding any one who had ever seen any one, who had ever known any one in that musty old town (which her ladyship remembered passing a night in upon her wedding tour, and thought insupportably gloomy) — this difficulty, I say, nearly baffled her. But, at last, from the Neapolitan Minister she obtained a letter for her son to the Marchesa Onofrio, a very great Bolognese lady: and this letter was now lying upon the desk before him.

There he sat in a dressing-coat of dark blue flannel, lined with scarlet, with Turkish trousers to match, twisting his yellow moustache into a point, and biting the end of his pen, in search of an epithet he could not find.

Descriptions of personal appearance are generally failures. The impression a man makes, not as he passes one in the street, but after being an hour in his society, is the only important point. Whether Laurence's eyes were blue or brown, whether he had

a long nose or a short one, signifies very little. I know he was reckoned an uncommonly good-looking fellow, and that his manners made people feel much pleased with themselves, which is, I suppose, the test of good breeding. His talk was very pleasant; not so brilliant that it burnt you up, or so powerful that it knocked you down, but characterized by a gentlemanly enthusiasm upon a variety of subjects, which you felt yourself encouraged to discuss with him.

How the man would act in any of the great emergencies of life; what were the stronger passions, if he had them, or more deeply hidden weaknesses, underlying the surface I have endeavoured to depict, — will be seen hereafter. At present it will be enough to show him to the reader as the world saw him, with just so much knowledge as the world had of those circumstances which had tended to mould his character.

CHAPTER II.

The following morning rose bright and sunny after the night's rain. Laurence woke late, having slept better on his rustling bed of maize than he had often done on more luxurious couches. Springing out of bed, he threw open the window and looked on the street below. He could hardly believe it to be the melancholy cut-throat looking place he had fancied it the night before. The sun smote the opposite houses in its morning glory, bringing out the details of their past magnificence into strong relief. The arms of some ancient family, probably long since impoverished, were yet remaining, rudely cut in stone, upon the façade of one of these palaces. A window was open, through which, in that clear atmosphere, Laurence's eyes could discern the painted ceiling and the rich mouldings of a large apartment — magnificence strangely in contrast with its present occupation apparently. The cracked jar on the window-sill, from which a young vine sprang, clustering up a pole, with leaves already yellow and tawny, indicated probably the fortunes of its possessors. A string of onions hung up beside it; a coffee-pot and some cooking utensil stood on a table near the window; and a *bambino*, like a bale of yellow linen

with two black jewels of eyes stuck in it, lay helpless on the floor.

Laurence noted these particulars with the curiosity of an observant man. He glanced down into the street below. A priest, shuffling along under the arcade, with a three-cornered beaver shading his pinched features, and a breviary under his arm. A peasant or two; then another priest, and then some soldiers. A housewife bearing her fowls and butter from market; and then more priests, and more soldiers; and more soldiers, and more priests.

As the procession became somewhat monotonous, Laurence roused himself to the fact that his toilette was still in the most elementary stage, and left his station at the window. Soon after, Giuseppe entered, with a pyramid of clothes and milk-jug full of hot water. A glance at the blooming face gradually protruding itself out of a Jersey, was enough to show the acute little Italian that his signore was in much better humour than the night before. Now, like other functionaries, Giuseppe aimed at ruling his chief. He had endeavoured to reconcile him to that humble *locanda*, as a necessary evil, for the night, but he had no intention of remaining there, or anywhere else in Bologna, beyond a day or two. It was a dull town, and the sooner they got on to Florence the better. His line of conduct was chalked out beforehand.

"Well?" cried Carr, still struggling into his

Jersey, "any chance of rooms, Giuseppe? Have you been to the San Marco, and the other places?"

Giuseppe shook his finger negatively backwards and forwards within an inch of his nose.

"No room for one dog, sare. We not stay in this beast-hole. This not place for one noble gentleman. We go to Firenzé, where all de English family go. Dere more pleasure nor here, and better picshur, sare; — var fine picshur in Firenze."

Carr's avidity in picture-hunting was looked on by his servant as a weakness for which he had a profound contempt, but out of which he occasionally made capital. When he wished to linger a day longer at Milan and Genoa, sundry palaces and churches ignored by *Murray* were declared by Giuseppe to contain Leonardos and Vandykes, with all the recorded treasures of those cities; and the young traveller was more than once induced to halt for an hour in his day's journey (while Giuseppe refreshed his inward man) by the rapturous account of "*una certa Madonna*" in some convent on the hill. The courier had grown strong in the belief that he could lead his master, not by the nose, but the eyes. Perhaps those eyes were at last becoming open: a succession of delusions had made them clearer-sighted. At all events, in any matter upon which Carr was resolutely bent, Giuseppe found that his eloquence was spent in vain.

"The bed was clean. I shall remain here till I can get in elsewhere."

"We no get in at San Marco, sare. De Marquis from Normanby have take apartment to-morrow. De Albergo Swizzero so full — so full — hold not one flea more, sare. Better we get on to Firenze, sare — *bellissima Firenze!* When you get there, so beautiful picshurs, you no look back at this beast-hole!"

"In this beast-hole I shall stay for the present, Giuseppe, so say no more about it. Take my passport to the post-office, and inquire whether there are any letters for me. And stay — take this letter with my card to the Palazzo Onofrio. No — upon second thoughts, I'll leave it myself; and I shall probably call at the San Marco, and find whether I have any chance of rooms."

The little Italian's cheek flushed angrily, and Laurence smiled. I am not sure that he was wrong. I think it extremely probable that had that letter found its way into Giuseppe's pocket, it would never have found its way into the Marchesa's hand, and this veracious history might never have been written! Certain it is that, thanks alone to that last determined hint, Laurence found himself comfortably settled in an apartment at the San Marco the following day.

To follow the course of this same morning, however, Laurence set forth immediately after breakfast, armed with a *Murray* (disguised in Russia leather), an opera-glass, a sketch-book, and a slender stock of Italian. *Laquais de place* he abjured. Up one dim arcaded street, and down another; past the fine old Foro de' Mercanti, and those famous uncomfortable

towers, toppling side by side for the last seven hundred years; into the giant Piazza, over which Neptune and his Tritons preside, thronged at this moment with merchandise and market folk, and a-blaze with coloured cotton handkerchiefs; up the steps of San' Petronio, and half-a-dozen other churches; sauntering, verifying *Murray*, sketching a priest or peasant, and questioning the sacristan in bald Italian; — so sped the morning hours with Carr.

It was two o'clock before he had found his way to the Onofrio Palace. He was directed to a large dilapidated building, of no great architectural pretensions, situated in a street which seemed to be little used as a thoroughfare. Round the pillars supporting the colonnade the grass and nettles sprang up luxuriantly; and owing to the great height of the houses on either side, the sun at this season only penetrated the centre of the street for an hour or two in the middle of the day. The gateway leading into the courtyard of the palace stood open. In the centre of that courtyard was a marble basin, surmounted by some rheumatic dolphins, whose playful antics were now reduced to a paltry trickle oozing down their moss-grown tails, and splashing ever and anon into the water below. Facing the gateway were two doors. Over one of these stood a board, on which was written "Galleria Onofrio;" and upon the bell beside it the word "Custode." Apparently the outlay on repairs had not been ex-

tensive in the palazzo for many a long year. Running his eye over that long range of windows, Laurence detected more than one broken pane, whose deficiency had been supplied by a fragment of shutter.

He pulled the custode's rusty bell, and upon the production of his letter for the Marchesa was directed to the other door. Seeing that he was a stranger and a foreigner, however, Cerberus thought it as well to improve the occasion by recommending Laurence not to omit inspecting the famous gallery of which this functionary kept the key. But Laurence — with Milan and Genoa delusions still fresh in his mind — thought this visit might safely be deferred. He was more curious to see the interior of the palace and its owner than works of art, in which he may be excused for beginning to feel somewhat sceptical.

A man in his shirt-sleeves, smelling of the stables, but with one arm struggling into a yellow-braided livery, scuffled to the door, unlocked and opened it ajar.

"The Marchesa does not receive."

Laurence explained, as well as he was able, that he only wished his card and a letter to be transmitted to her. The man turned the card all round, and eyed Laurence, and looked at the seal of the letter as if he had thoughts of breaking it. Finally, he muttered, with a puzzled air, "Bene, bene," and withdrew, barring the door cautiously after him.

"A queer people this," said the Englishman as he sauntered away. "Fancy any of our swells living in this wretched manner. As to its being a palace, it's more like a deserted cotton factory at Manchester (only there isn't such a thing), and for all the benefit one gets of an Italian sun and sky, in this gloomy street, one might as well live at the bottom of the old well at home. I wonder what sort of woman this Marchesa is. Will she ask me to dinner? Perhaps they don't dine in these parts. Has she a jealous husband, by-the-by, who keeps her under lock and key, and the surveillance of that unsavoury servant? Perhaps my letter may never reach her. Well, I can pass some days very pleasantly here, at all events; but I must confess to myself (I wouldn't for the world to any one else), that I shouldn't be sorry for a little society. Solitude's all very well for awhile, but I'm a gregarious animal, and want some one to be able to say 'how delightful solitude is' *to*, — which isn't original, by the way; but I forget who made the remark. Now then for the pictures" — and he inquired of the first passer-by the way to the Accademia.

Here it would be easy and appropriate to launch forth into the raptures evinced by Laurence on his first visit to the gallery of Bologna, interspersed with a few second-hand Ruskinisms as to the false teaching of its eclectic school, and the beauty and moral worth of its Francias, Lorenzo Costas, and the earlier men. It would be easy, I say, to imagine

that Carr thought and felt a great deal which he wrote afterwards in journals and æsthetic letters to artistic friends. But to say the truth, it was nothing of the kind. After his half-dozen churches, he felt painfully conscious that it is only given to a man to appreciate a certain number of good things at a time; and as he threw himself languidly on a bench and looked round him, the reflection that what he there saw had to be described in fitting terms weighed like a mill-stone on his mind. He was honestly very fond of pictures, and might have dispensed with art-cant; but the sense of his "position" as a connoisseur, visiting Italy for the first time, was too strong for him. He was disgusted to find that he was not "struck," and "excited," and "elevated," as much as he ought to have been; but he did the wisest thing under the circumstances — he went out straightway and took a long refreshing draught of Nature after this surfeit of Art.

Standing on the Monte della Guardia, with the grand old city lying at his feet, and the tawny plain stretching beyond, broken with its patches of vine and olive garden, the "sentinel cypresses" beside the white flat-roofed villas, and the convent-crest of some wooded slope; gazing, far as the eye could reach in that clear Italian air, to the purple ridges of the Apennines on the one hand, and the faintly articulated shore of the Adriatic on the other, Laurence felt that this was a gallery which could never weary, or irritate, or lose its intrinsic value with the

taste of a passing generation. Eclectics might be in or out of fashion, but this was everlasting; — above all criticism, and beyond appeal. The soothing influence of such a scene, under the glowing light of an autumn afternoon, was never more strongly felt than by Laurence Carr that day.

The sunset was rapidly melting into dusk, as he descended the hill and threaded the streets towards his *locanda.* In doing so, he passed the steps of a church as two ladies, closely veiled, entered. The heavy leather door in swinging back disclosed for a moment the dimly-lit interior; and the distant strain of an organ, blended with voices chanting, fell on Laurence's ear. He turned and entered. The church was almost dark, save where the light burning before an altar served to define indistinctly the image of its patron saint, and haply some suppliant motionless in prayer before it. From the small side chapel, however, where vespers were being performed, a flood of light streamed down upon the pavement, against which the kneeling figures told out like spots of black; and here and there an earnest, uplifted face was strongly illuminated. A picture this to be seen every evening, but none the less striking: and as the plaintive words of the hymn,

"Madre del Mondo, ora pro nobis,"

died away in sobbing cadence, Laurence was not Protestant enough not to feel softened and subdued.

He leant against a column, while his eye rested

on the varied groups around him; and he strove to read the withered countenance of the crone muttering over her beads, the black-browed peasant, fresh from the Apennines for the fair, staring up superstitiously at the tinselled Madonna, and the ruby light burning before her; — the half-clad children turning restlessly at the sight of a stranger, and ready to hold out their hands for a *bajocco* while they continued jabbering their Pater-noster.

Suddenly his attention was arrested by the two figures whose entrance into the church had originally attracted him. He had lost sight of them in the dusk, but he now observed that they had taken up their position not far from where he stood, and were seated somewhat apart from the worshippers in the chapel. Indeed, they took no active part in the service, and appeared to have come there, like himself, as listeners and spectators. They had both drawn aside their heavy veils — secure, as they thought, no doubt, from observation: and the small black bonnets left no portion of their faces concealed. It was easy to see at a glance that they were mother and daughter. Very unlike Italians — if Italians they were; — with that ineffable something of gesture and manner that belongs almost exclusively to our own countrywomen.

Laurence's first glance was one of curiosity; the second, of interest. After that, he had no eyes for anything else, as long as he stood there.

Let me try and give you some idea of them.

It might have been difficult to tell the age of the elder lady. She was tall and slight, and her fair hair was streaked with silver. Her cheek was pale and worn, and she had a deep-set look of sorrow in her eyes which it was difficult to get rid of when you had once looked at them. Other faces that you had known for years and years would be forgotten sooner than this one. She must in youth have been eminently beautiful, the outline of the features was so still; and though the likeness between them was strong, that gentle, delicate-looking girl beside her had not the pretensions to classical regularity of form the mother still possessed. Her sweet, fawn-like eyes, and the charming expression of her mouth, were perhaps the girl's chief beauty. She was very pale, with an abundance of wavy brown hair drawn back behind her ears, and — as Laurence observed when she took off her glove — one of the most beautiful hands it was possible to see. She was very simply attired in some kind of gray worsted dress, which, with its narrow white collar and cuffs and black silk mantle, was unlike the raiment of many colours so much loved by Italian ladies.

The expression of the elder lady's face, as she listened to the music, underwent little change; it was one of deep, tranquil melancholy. She leant back in her chair, folding her hands upon her knee, with her eyes fixed upon a picture by Francia which was indistinctly illuminated in the chapel. The young girl's mobility of countenance, on the other

hand, expressed a thousand varying emotions; but it was evident that she was wholly absorbed in the music, and the thoughts it naturally awakened. Unconscious of herself, as it were; having no past teeming with sad memories to rise up, and stand between her and the sweet and holy influences of the hour, her fair face seemed to indicate that she was listening to messages from another world.

The service was over. The ladies rose, lowered their veils, and glided out of the church. Laurence followed them. At just sufficient distance to enable him to distinguish the two figures in the deepening twilight, he tracked them as they threaded the silent streets and piazze of this tranquil quarter of the city. They were approaching one of the gates; and now they turned down a *vicolo*, overshadowed on one side by the fig-trees that hung over a garden-wall. As he was proceeding to follow, rather precipitately, down this narrow lane, Laurence became suddenly conscious that he was not only observed, but that another person was apparently similarly employed to himself. The figure of a man, in one of those large cloaks which are universal throughout Italy, had for some time past walked on the other side of the way without attracting his attention. Now, however, at the corner of this *vicolo*, the man turned round and eyed Laurence deliberately. The English gentleman felt rather angry and rather ashamed of himself; but, of course, resolved all the more not to have his curiosity balked. It was impossible to

distinguish the features of the stranger, though Laurence brushed close to him. The small English travelling-cap, however, lent no such friendly shadow as the Italian's beaver, and the latter was probably able to see Laurence's face sufficiently to recognize him at any future time.

Laurence passed him, and walked on. A few yards down the *vicolo*, the ladies turned under the archway of a house — the one to which that garden apparently belonged — and a small wicket closed after them. Laurence, of course, felt himself bound to continue his walk to the end of the *vicolo*, and find his way out as best he might. Curiosity, however, prevailed so far over discretion as to induce him to turn his head when about half-way. The man in the cloak was just entering that house.

Who were they? and what was he? Husband, brother, lover? Laurence felt that he should never rest till he had learnt the history of the inmates of that house.

At the bottom of the *vicolo* flowed the river Savena. The Italian must have smiled, Laurence thought, at that thin artifice of his continuing his walk to the end of what was, virtually, a blind alley! He retraced his steps; noting the house well — a large and handsome one — as he passed it, but feeling that he should be somewhat puzzled to find his way back there again. An hour's random walking, after several contradictory directions from the passers-by, brought him safe, hungry, and in an

agreeable frame of mind to his inn. There was something worth living — in Bologna — for, after all. Here was a mystery — for he chose to consider it a mystery — and "a face to go mad for," as Byron once wrote, and Lady Carrlyon often most inappropriately quoted. It was astonishing how infinitely better the greasy Italian dinner tasted to him that evening, and he began to think the inn was really not such a bad place, after all.

So ended Laurence Carr's first day in Bologna.

CHAPTER III.

The following morning he removed to the San Marco, as I have said. But, before this, a note came directed to him in characters resembling a child's design for lightning. The tenor of the note, which was in French, and not very legible, was to beg *l'honorable Carr* (of course, the Christian name was lost sight of) to visit the Marchesa Onofrio in her opera-box that evening: to which l'honorable Carr returned an affirmative answer.

Our Englishman passed the morning of that day again in the gallery, fancying that every Madonna, in turn, bore some resemblance to the sweet face that haunted him; but more especially the little Red Ridinghood of a Magdalen, by Timoteo delle Vite; with an order to copy which picture he instantly gladdened the heart of a poor artist whom he found at work. The afternoon he spent in trying to retrace his steps of the previous evening; and, though he did not exactly succeed in doing this, he found his way, at last, by a more circuitous route to the *vicolo*, and, in astronomical language, "took observations" of the house and its general aspect. Not a voice, not a foot-fall, not the flutter of a drapery; the shutters hermetically closed against the after-

noon sun, on the garden side; and looking through the *grille* into a small paved court, across which the shadow of the wall streamed slantwise, a mutilated bust was to be seen, holding divided empire with four orange-trees in green boxes; and a clothes'-line, with linen hanging out to dry, between them!

The only positive piece of information Laurence gained was the name of the house. Above the archway was written, in attenuated white letters, *Casa Lamberti.*

The opera-house of Bologna, though not large, is one of the prettiest in Europe. The effect produced by each box having a balcony, which projects in a circular form, is gay and graceful. These balconies, like the rest of the house, are decorated in white and gold, the interior of the boxes being scarlet; and when brilliantly filled, as they were on the night of Laurence's first visit, the *coup d'œil* is very striking and picturesque.

The box-keeper opened the marchesa's door, and the young man entered. The box was untenanted; and, after a glance of surprise and admiration round the house, Laurence was about to retire and stroll into the pit, from which he could watch for the marchesa's arrival, when the door was thrown back by a servant in rich livery (whom Laurence recognized as his friend of the shirt-sleeves), bearing an opera-glass, cloak, footstool, &c. He was followed by a tall, handsome woman, with a lively, pleasant expression, about forty years of age, in a lace dress,

which was no doubt very valuable, but would have been better for the wash-tub. She had a great quantity of jewels, and ribands, and artificial flowers about her; in spite of which there was that unmistakable air of nobility which we term in England a "thorough-bred" look. Her manner, indeed, had not the repose to which Laurence was accustomed, in the best London circles; but, inasmuch as it was genial and natural, with nothing sham, affected, or pretentious about it, was closely allied to the very best manners of all nations.

She greeted her visitor with great cordiality, and poured forth her questions in French with a volubility which fairly bewildered him. How long was he going to stay? Was he travelling alone? That must be *triste* indeed! Was this his first visit to Italy? She herself had never been to England. No, that frightful sea — oh! she could never cross it. She had known one charming English lady who had pressed her to come and visit her in England: Madame — Madame Wite. Did he know Madame Wite? She had a fine house in *Régent* Street, and was no doubt in the best society. "For you English," she added, "have different societies, I am told. We have only two, the *nobili* and the *mezzo ceto*, and they never mix. If you remain here, I will introduce you to all we have: but I suppose you will be going on to Florence and Rome, where your countrymen assemble in crowds? Here we have no foreigners, you know."

"That is partly my reason for staying at Bologna. I wish to see something of Italian life in a purely Italian town. Half Rome is divided between French and English, I am told. Besides this, I come to study the Fine Arts, and desire to become well acquainted with all the treasures your city possesses. I have already paid two visits to the Gallery, with much interest." (Oh, Laurence!)

"Ah! And do you care for music as well? you English are cold — not enthusiasts as we are." The marchesa laughed. "You never draw the carriage of a *prima donna* home, as we do here — do you? Have you heard the Frezzolini? Listen then — she is beginning her cavatina."

Instead of listening herself, the lady turned to greet a short stout man who entered the box, and who raised her fingers to his lips with a half-mock ceremony, as he pressed his hand to his heart, laughing and gesticulating, and talking Italian so fast that Laurence could only catch a word here and there. There was something about a bet, and the word "*il lupo*" (the wolf) constantly recurred. Laurence kept his head towards the stage, and affected to be absorbed in Frezzolini's exquisite singing of "*Ernani, Ernani, involami.*" I am afraid, in reality, curiosity rendered him but an indifferent listener. What the deuce were they both laughing so heartily at?

The marchesa turned to Laurence at the conclu-

sion of Frezzolini's cavatina, and begged to present him to her cousin, the Prince Ortolani.

"You wonder at our laughing and talking while our prima donna is singing? I see it by your face, Signor Laurence — and I generally *do* listen to her, and to my tenor — ah! you have not heard my tenor yet? he does not sing to-night. But you see, we have had this opera and *Nabucco* on alternate nights for two months; and as I spend every evening in this box, I cannot hold my tongue always — *Ecco il lupo!*" and touching the prince's arm, she pointed, laughing, to a box nearly opposite, where an old gentleman with a hard grizzled face had just seated himself beside a middle-aged woman, and was taking a survey of the house through his glass. It stopped at the marchesa's box, and a little sign of recognition passed with the tips of the gloved fingers; but still the glass remained stationary, and then some other sign was made which Laurence did not understand. He ventured to inquire who the old gentleman was, when the prince had left the box. "That one opposite?" said the marchesa, laughing. "Oh, that is only my husband. He wants to know who you are. He will probably be in here presently — an honour he has not paid me for a week — on purpose to find out your name." The tinge of sarcasm in her tone was so slight as to be scarcely perceptible; but she continued, after a pause, with something akin to sadness in her manner: "You do not understand living like that in England, they tell

me. We are accustomed to it here, Signor Laurence. The marchese and I have separate establishments, and are very good friends — when we meet!"

She would probably have continued the subject which she had opened upon without the smallest hesitation, and it is difficult to say when her frank revelations might have stopped, had not two young men entered the box at that moment. Her manner instantly changed, and she greeted them with the same gaiety as before: introducing them to Laurence as Count Razzi and Count Giulio Blangini. They were both rather handsome; both noisy and good-humoured: Blangini of the full-blown greasy, and Razzi of the lean aquiline type. They talked French with a strong accent, but great fluency: had been to Paris, and spoke of Chantilly races with enthusiasm. Then they questioned Laurence as to sport in England — seemed surprised to hear there were no wild boars or wolves — and Razzi offered to take him to a hunt in the Apennines, if Laurence prolonged his stay in Bologna. In short, the young men fraternized, as no three Englishmen ever do, at first sight.

"I put my English friend under your charge," said the marchesa. "You are both of you to make Bologna as pleasant as you can to him while he stays here — provided you don't prevent his coming to my box every evening. Is there any fair lady in the house, signore, whom you would like an introduction to? One of these gentlemen shall effect

it, if there is — provided," she added, laughing, "it be not the contessa opposite."

Ever since his arrival, Laurence's eyes had wandered round the house from time to time, in the hopes of discovering his *incognita;* but in vain. With the policy of a man of the world, however, he protested that any exchange for the society in which he had the privilege of finding himself, must be one for the worse.

The marchesa was probably too much accustomed to this sort of language to believe in it; but she seemed gratified, and strove to make herself additionally agreeable.

The act was over, and the door again opened, admitting that grizzly old man with the lanthorn jaws, and cold cruel eyes, who was not inappropriately designated "il lupo."

The marchesa extended her hand, the fingers of which he just touched, bowing with great ceremony to the two Italian gentlemen, and saying to his wife, in the most agreeable, friendly manner, and by no means an unmusical voice, "Who is your friend, *cara mia?* Introduce me."

The introduction effected, and the marchese having ascertained who and what Laurence was, after a few civil speeches, walked out of the box.

"He is now gone to his friends, the *Neri*, to communicate the fact of our having an Englishman and a heretic among us."

The *Neri*, as I suppose everyone in England

knows by this time, are the Church party, as opposed to the *Bianchi*, or liberals.

"Ugh! *quei preti!*" said Razzi, with an expression of disgust, but in so low a tone that Laurence could hardly catch the words. "I wish they were all —"

"Hush! *caro mio*," cried the marchesa. "We all go to confession, remember, and are bound to confess each *other's* sins, as well as our own. Ha! ha! Here is our English friend wants to learn Italian. Can't you recommend him some reverend padre, who will make him a convert to the holy faith while he teaches him the grammar? By-the-by, there is Guido in the pit. I have not seen him for an age. He is the very man for you to know, signore — the only young man among us from whom you will gain anything *worth* knowing, I'm afraid. He is not like these *ignoranti*," she added, laughing, as she pointed with her fan to the two young counts, who grinned good-humouredly. "He will be able to tell you what is worth seeing in his native town, and knows every picture of merit. Then he has taken the highest honours at our university, and is a *savant* in all historical matters; while I wager that neither of *these* have ever been inside the gallery in their lives, and don't know whether Annibale Caracci was a general or a poet!"

"A general, of course," said Blangini, indignantly. "It was he who crossed the Alps."

"No; a poet," cried Razzi. "Was it not he who wrote *La Secchia Rapita?*"

"I told you so," said the marchesa, clapping her hands with delight. "*Cari figli miei* — go to school, both of you, and talk of your horses and your dogs and Mademoiselle Cerito's pretty feet; but never of art and literature, and what you don't understand! I wish I could make Guido look up," and the marchesa kept making signals with her fan, which the young man below either did not or would not observe. His eyes were resolutely fixed on the stage.

"I will go round," said Count Razzi, "and send him up to you."

"I will accompany you, if you will allow me," said Laurence. "I shall get a *coup d'œil* of this side of the house," and the two young men left the box together.

"The marchesa is a charming woman, Signor Carr," said the count, as soon as they were in the lobby; "rather curious — original — but she amuses us more than Stentorello — and then, what a good creature! Poor thing! everyone likes her — everyone pities her!"

"I suppose you mean on account of her husband? He looks like an old brute."

"So he is — a canting, stingy, old *Codino*. But she can never have cared for him; and when he neglected and ill-used her, why, naturally, she found

consolation elsewhere. *Povera donna!* Her first lover died, and then her second —"

"Oh! she has had a succession, then?"

"*Che vuole?* A woman must have some one to care for. Il Lupo gives her up one floor of the palace, but hardly allows her enough to keep three servants, while he gives half his fortune to the Contessa Peppi, and the other half to the priests for the good of his soul. The contessa is very pious, and they go to mass together," added the young Italian, with a sneer.

To an Englishman, even with some knowledge of the world, the announcement of these recognized positions as a matter of course, was rather astounding. The count was evidently too simple and too literal to be inventing for Laurence's amusement; and certainly what the latter saw tended to corroborate the statement.

They were at the entrance of the pit. A tall, dark young man, with melancholy eyes and a remarkable breadth of brow, stood leaning with folded arms against the door. His eyes were fixed on the orchestra, but it might be confidently asserted that his thoughts were very far away.

"Guido," said Count Razzi, touching him on the shoulder, "I am sent by the Marchesa Onofrio to bring you to her box, and to introduce you to this English gentleman, her friend. You are to give him all sorts of information about things we know nothing of, *caro mio* — so come along."

The young man, when first addressed, turned quickly round, and a slight flush overspread his face. It even then, however, retained its habitual expression, which was one of thoughtful, almost unnatural calm. He bowed gravely; but either Count Razzi forgot to say, or Laurence failed to catch, his new acquaintance's name.

"I will follow you; and if I can be of any service to the Marchesa Onofrio, I shall be happy."

It occurred to Laurence that this was not remarkably courteous in form: or perhaps it only appeared so, in contrast to the exaggerated expressions of sorrow, and devotion, and ecstasy, which he had heard so frequently used that evening. But it was evident at a glance that here was a man of another stamp, whom such manners would ill become, and who, on most occasions, would say, probably, considerably less than he felt — never more. Laurence, in spite of this taciturnity, found himself irresistibly attracted. It was that involuntary attraction which a man occasionally feels for something immeasurably nobler, loftier, and stronger than himself. It has nothing to do with personal liking. A man may be weak enough to like something which he knows to be perfectly worthless. On the other hand, it is less the individual than the moral force he represents to our minds, which exercises a sovereign influence over us, and bids us bow down and do homage.

"It is a century since we have seen you, Guido!"

said the marchesa, holding out her hand. "You lead the life of a recluse, and never come to the opera."

"I leave it for those who have a better right to enjoy it, marchesa," said the young man, smiling gravely (so to speak). "I cannot afford, you know, either time or money, which must be my excuse for not oftener paying you my respects here."

"*Dio mio! caro*," cried the marchesa, impatiently. "Your good old mother is not making you a *Nero*, is she? I suppose we have none of us either time or money to waste — so my confessor always tells me; and I certainly know I have little enough of the latter. But look you, my dear Guido, what should we do without our music? It is the only thing poor Italy has left her!"

A darker shade passed over the young man's face; and the lady continued:

"If I gave up my opera box, I should only add one more miserable person to the world for three or four hours every evening. But, *caro mio*" — (and here she dropped her voice, while the two Italians at the back of the box talked and laughed so loud that Laurence could only catch her words now and then) — "I know how you employ much of your time — not *all* in hard law studies." He caught the name of Pio Nono several times, and the words "liberal reform," "constitution," "no faith in priests," &c. &c.; and she ended by saying — "I have no money to give — nothing but my sympathy and

my help in any way — in every way — when the good time comes."

There was a short pause; and then the marchesa, turning abruptly to Laurence, said:

"Razzi has made you two acquainted. Now, Guido, in the first place you must recommend a good Italian professor to this English gentleman; only don't let it be a priest. Then you are to give him information as to everything that is worth seeing, and *not* worth seeing, in our city. That last is very important, as the *laquais-de-place* will try and drag him to upwards of a hundred churches and thirty palaces!"

"As to a professor," answered the young man she called Guido, "my old friend Garofalo has a fair knowledge of English, and, what is still rarer in these days, a thorough knowledge of our own language. He is an accomplished classic, and the best guide to the text of Dante that a foreigner can have. If you wish it, sir, I will ask him to call on you."

"Pray do not give yourself that trouble. If you will let me have his address —"

"We live in the same house, and I am constantly with him, so that it is no trouble. I cannot offer to be of much assistance to you here, as my time is very much occupied, but if there is anything in which I can, I shall be very happy to help you."

"Thanks. Perhaps you will allow me to do myself the pleasure of calling on *you*," said Carr, in

his most urbane manner. "May I ask where you reside?"

"I am seldom disengaged but in the evening," replied the Italian, "when you will no doubt have plenty of other engagements. I live in — the Casa Lamberti."

Laurence started, and felt himself colour. The Italian's eyes were fixed very calmly upon him, and he continued slowly:

"So that, perhaps, upon the whole, if you wish to see me, it would be as well that I should call upon you, Signor Carr."

"Yes, caro," said the marchesa. "Go and call on him to-morrow; but don't prevent his coming here in the evening. I propose taking him to my cousin's, the Princess Ortolani, who has a reception to-morrow night."

"And you have promised, Signor Carr, to come and see my stables at two o'clock," said Count Razzi.

"And I am to introduce him to the club at twelve," said Blangini.

"I will take my chance with my friend Garofalo of finding you free from these numerous engagements, Signor Carr, towards dusk. Do not hurry back to your hotel on that account, however; if you remain in Bologna, I have no doubt we shall meet again." And bowing to the marchesa, he left the box.

Laurence immediately inquired his name.

"Count Guido Lamberti, of a very noble old family, but sadly impoverished. His mother is obliged to let the greater part of their palace, and and lives in a miserable corner with her son. He is devoting himself to the study of law — unlike the young men of our nobility in general, who consider that or any other profession but a soldier's a *degradation!*"

"So — then — the house — the palace — I mean the — Casa Lamberti — is tenanted by other families than Count Guido's?"

"This old professor, Garofalo, and one other family — country-people of yours, by-the-by — who have been here some few months, I believe, but brought no letters to anyone, and seem to avoid society."

"Ah! What does the family consist of?"

"Father and mother, one daughter, and some niece or friend, I believe. The name is Courteney. Do you know them?"

"N — no. I think I've met them. The daughter is pretty, isn't she?"

"*Ravissante*, I am told, but very unapproachable: kept like a princess in a fairy tale! All our *gioventù* have been intriguing to get an introduction in vain. Is it not true, Blangini? Well! be consoled, *caro mio*, your elders have failed equally! Fancy Il Lupo being guilty of an infidelity to the contessa! Ha! ha! ha! Ortolani has been telling me such a good story of his catching him in the act of dogging this little

English girl about the town in the dusk, like a veritable *lupo!* The best of it is, I can't help fancying Ortolani must have been similarly employed himself!"

The two counts rolled on their chairs with laughter; but the Englishman didn't seem amused.

"*Si dice*, she has a large fortune," said Blangini, when he had at last recovered his composure. "All English ladies, I believe, are blonde and have large fortunes. For my part, I adore blondes!"

"*And* large fortunes," laughed the marchesa.

"She is not to be compared to the other, the dark one, whoever she is," said Razzi. "Fortune or not, she is the one for *me! Ah! che cara creatura!*" and he blew an imaginary kiss with the tips of his gloved fingers, indicative of passionate admiration. "What eyes! What a figure! What an ankle! (*Con rispetto parlando*), I am resolved to know her, marchesa. What will you bet me I don't succeed?"

"I am too poor to bet, *caro mio*, as you know; besides, I wish you all success. But the opera is over. Come, let us be going. *Buona sera, figli miei.* Signor Carr will see me to my chair."

The marchesa rose; and as the two Italians, after raising her fingers to their lips, took the hint and retired, she continued: "You see what I am! If you are not bored, Signor Carr, come back and have a little supper. I have asked one or two pleasant people and my pet tenor, Tasca — *una società scelta*, as we say here."

The marchesa's servant appeared at the door at the same moment, and Laurence, folding the white cloak around his fair companion, conducted her through the densely-crowded lobby downstairs. As he handed her into her old-fashioned sedan chair (a relic of past times not yet utterly abandoned by great Italian ladies in places like Bologna) and followed it along the arcade towards the Palazzo Onofrio, more than one jeering voice in the crowd might have been heard to exclaim:

"Ho! ho! The situation of *cicisbeo* has been vacant some time. Has she offered it to that good-looking Englishman?"

CHAPTER IV.

LEAVING Laurence Carr to the enjoyment of the pleasant little supper-party assembled in the marchesa's apartments in the Palazzo Onofrio, and to the study of a society entirely new to him, we will take leave to follow Guido Lamberti as he strides along the dimly-lit streets towards his home. The melancholy lamp here and there swung across from arcade to arcade, or burning before an image of the Virgin at the corner of the street, reveals the powerful figure of the young man, his beaver thrown forward on his brow, his cloak swung under one arm and over the other shoulder, his foot planted on the ground with the firm and vigorous tread of one who knows his goal, and walks straight to it.

He knocks at the little wicket of the Casa Lamberti, which is locked at this hour, and on being admitted by the porter, turns off to a small door at the right hand of the court, instead of entering by the principal one in front.

Nanna, the old woman who has nursed him in his cradle, is at the top of the winding stair. Her yellow brown face peers forth in strong relief under its white coif, as she holds out a *lucerna* to light her young master up.

"*Dorme?*" (Is she asleep?) asks the young man.

"*Che, che,*" replies the Nanna, pettishly. "Would you have her sleep while you are gadding about like this at night, getting into evil courses, and turning a deaf ear to all the good padre's exhortations; never going to mass, and giving up confession, and associating with bad, irreligious people? Sleep! indeed. She has enough to do to pray for you without thinking of sleep. Six-and-thirty prayers she has offered up this day on your account. As to her own salvation, blessed saint! that was assured long since."

Out of tenderness to the old woman, submitting patiently to this attack, from which his conscience held him clear, and to which, it must be confessed, use had somewhat hardened him, the young man sought his mother's room without reply.

A large, bare chamber, without carpet or curtain, producing an involuntary shiver as one entered it, even from the outer air. A tattered piece of tapestry, representing *some* sacred subject — so Guido had always been told, as a child, though, from the latitude of treatment, it was difficult to say *what* — hung along the wall; and against it stood a hard battered-looking bed. A shred of the curtain hung over the head of the bed, but none at the foot. A board was stuffed against the grate, to keep out the winds which came whistling down the chimney; for fire there was none this cold November night. But seeing that the circulation of the poor devotee who

occupied the room was slow — more from fasts and want of exercise than age — a *scaldino*, or jar of embers, had been placed near her. It had long since died out, but she still stretched her withered hands over it from time to time, striving to recall a little warmth to them.

She must have been a handsome woman in her youth: thin, yellow-skinned, and shriveled as she now was, her brown eyes were still intensely bright; her black hair still intensely black; but no other vestige of youth was left. The figure was bent — dwindled into decrepitude, and so wasted that the black serge dress she wore hung like a sack upon her. She had also a black net or crape cap, and a black collar; and the withered yellow-face in this framework presented as lugubrious a picture as could well be seen. A crucifix was on the table beside her, and a pamphlet, upon the corner of which was represented a bleeding heart, with an invocation to the *Madonna dei sette dolori.*

The mother's eyes looked eagerly towards the door as her son entered, but her lips continued moving rapidly and noiselessly, and she made a sign to him not to disturb the prayer she was saying. In another moment she dropped the rosary into her lap, and stretching out her hands, drew her son towards her, and pressed her poor trembling lips to his forehead.

"Where have you been, my Guido? Thanks be to our blessed lady who has sent you back safe!

It is rare that you are out so late at night, and I became uneasy, fearing I know not what!"

"I am sorry for that, mother," said the young man, tenderly stroking her hand. "It is, as you say, rare that I am out so late as this; but I was induced to look in at the opera for half an hour."

"You *used* not to go to the opera?" pursued the countess, looking inquisitively into his face. "What took you there?" Then seeing that her son hesitated between his natural truthfulness and the desire to avoid her question, she sighed deeply and continued, in an altered voice: "Alas! my Guido, I fear that the good padre is right, and that you have taken to evil companions — enemies of our holy religion, agitators, and such like. Oh, my son, would you but open your heart to receive the consolations the Church has to offer, you would find joy and peace, and not be vexed by these vain questions! Under whatever ills we suffer here the Church teaches us resignation."

"Resignation? That is a cowardly virtue for men with hearts that feel wrongs and don't believe them to be inevitable." Then, as if ashamed of having been betrayed into saying even this much, he quickly added — "But we will not discuss these questions, dear mother, for you know we shall never agree on certain points. You see them through the eyes of Padre Stefano. So be it. I would not for worlds disturb your opinions on many matters,

wherein I happen to differ from the Jesuit College. Let us avoid speaking of them."

"Nay, Guido," said his mother, with a *naïveté* her spiritual counsellor certainly would have reprehended, "the good patre has desired me, on the contrary, to try and bring you to speak on these matters, and open your heart as much as possible."

"I have no doubt he did," responded her son, with a slight curl of the lip.

"He fears that you are too intimate with these English people, Guido. I have no fault to find with them myself. They pay their rent very regularly; and Nanna says they are clean, and have done no damage to the furniture. But oh, my son! remember — they are heretics!"

"Yes! they are heretics. Perhaps some pious Catholics might not be as liberal in all their dealings, if applied to by a Protestant priest as Padre Stefano applied to them in aid of his schools."

"The devil often misleads us, my son, by an assumption of liberality," responded his mother, shaking her head. "Not that I would insinuate aught against your friends — only they do not acknowledge our blessed Lady; and what is all virtue without that but a vanity and a snare? If you would use your influence now to —"

"Mother," said the son, abruptly, "there are subjects on which it is dangerous to speak. Our Church is one. I believe the edifice to be rotten,

and that it cannot hold together as it is, even with a good man like this new Pope at its head. Signor Courteney sees this as clearly as I do. He and his family are my greatest friends, but we do not discuss religion. There would be little profit on either side. You may give this comforting assurance to the padre, that if I am an unworthy son to the Church, my Protestant friends are at least innocent of any endeavour to seduce me over to theirs."

The countess sighed, and again shook her head. Then, after some little hesitation, she said softly:

"My son, how many scudi are there in the purse? The Propaganda are greatly in need of funds, and I have promised the good padre to give all I can. These are not times to think of personal comfort, and I can do very well without the fur muff you wished to buy me."

"Listen, mother. The small sum now in the purse is the sole produce I have yet gained for many weeks' hard labour. It is the money Volpino, the bookseller, paid me for those translations I made for him. It is barely enough to enable me to purchase a few articles necessary for you, and I will *not* consent to dedicate it to the use of the Propaganda. Nearly the whole of the rent you received last month was seized upon by Padre Stefano."

"Do not speak of the good padre in that manner, my son."

"Well, well; he kindly consented to accept it for the use of his order. Up to what point, think you, mother, he intends you should impoverish yourself?"

"We brought nothing into this world, my son, neither may we carry anything out."

"No!" exclaimed the young man, moved by his momentary irritation to a somewhat unseemly jest. "Padre Stefano would take good care of that! Forgive me, mother; I would not wound you for the world. When the rent of the palazzo is paid in a few days, do what you like; but this money must not be touched by the Jesuits. I have sworn it."

A look of anguish came over the old lady's face, and when her son stooped down to kiss her forehead, her hand trembled as it passed over the wave of his long brown hair.

"Good-night, mother."

"Good-night, my son. May the holy Mother keep, and lead you back into the right way."

He passed through the ante-room, where Nanna, with a clasp-knife in her hand, and a crust of bread and an onion on her lap, was engaged upon her evening meal. She paid no attention to her young master, but continued eating; and he, desiring the faithful old servant to go to his mother, and urge her retiring to rest, left the room.

But not yet to seek his own; though the hundred church clocks of Bologna, from their lofty campaniles, have already called out the hour of eleven

to each other. Not yet will he throw himself on his hard pallet, and toss in troubled dreams, it may be, until morning. At the top of the winding stair which I have named are three doors: one leading to his mother's rooms, one to his own, and one (which is locked and never opened) to the main body of the palace, now tenanted by the Courteney family. The wing occupied by the Lambertis, you understand, is quite distinct; having a separate entrance and staircase, and only connected with the central building by this unused door. It was this door the young man approached, listening attentively for several minutes for some sound of life. But there was none: all seemed buried in profound silence upon the other side, and Guido turned and descended the stair. Here he knocked at a door upon which was nailed a card labelled "Ugo Garofalo, Professore de Lingua," and at the invitation of a deep rich voice, he turned the handle and entered.

A man of fifty, with a luminous full eye, a massive jaw, and a brow whose bumps and inequalities told out strongly under the lamp by which he read, was seated at a table in the centre of the room. He was enveloped in a blue cloth cloak, the collar of which came above his ears; he wore a small velvet cap, and carried an antique *intaglio*, the size of a moderate saucer, upon his fore-finger. That he was addicted to snuff, the appearance of things amply indicated. And by "things," I do not mean the nasal organs alone — no, nor the close-

shorn lip and chin, but the shirt and the sleeve, and the hands, and the writing-desk, with its litter of books and papers, and the two silk pocket-handkerchiefs beside him, and, above all, that unmistakable horn box, held betwixt finger and thumb.

The room, which was small, was lined, piled, strewed with books. Not alone on shelves, tables, drawers, and mantel-piece — the floor was covered with them; the very bed groaned under a weight of quartos; nay, I am afraid the basin itself had been pressed into the service. Among these books one was to be found repeated in all forms, and types, and editions. That book was the *Divina Commedia*. There is a story of a German malefactor, who committed any number of crimes in order to procure rare editions of the Bible. There is no knowing what iniquity this estimable gentleman might not have been tempted to perpetrate for the sake of an unknown edition of Dante.

He greeted Guido with a nod of the head and a hearty smile, without rising from his chair.

"Be seated, my friend. Well, where do you come from, and what news do you bring?"

"One thing at a time. I come from the opera, where I went for the sole purpose of seeing — you know whom, Garofalo. Tell me first, if you can, why were they not there?"

"The signore was unwell, and the madame could not leave him. I saw Mademoiselle Sara in the garden, who seemed properly out of sorts at

being disappointed. She said the signore made a point of being ill whenever they were going anywhere. It is lucky, my friend, you are not in love with *her*. That young lady has something of a *temper*."

The young man leant his head upon his hand, and sat silent for a while.

"I have no admiration for Mademoiselle Sara," he said, at last; "but she is in a *dependent position;* at least, the distance between us were not so hopeless, Garofalo. When I first knew the Courteney family I was a boy. It seemed then a bright dream which might some day be realized — that the golden-haired little girl should become my wife. *Now* that dream seems more and more distant every day!"

"Count Guido Lamberti," said the professor, with an ironical smile, "your modesty is excessive. One would hardly say that the representative of an ancient Bolognese family was not a fitting alliance for the daughter of an English private gentleman."

"Garofalo, you know well what any honest man must feel in my position. An ancient name doesn't pay debts — doesn't render a man independent. It is rather a hindrance to any active employment in this poor land of ours, at the present time. What have the accademical honours of this university done for me? Nothing. I work hard at the study of law, but an aristocratic advocate is an anomaly to which

few will be able to reconcile themselves. I might, perhaps, get some small post under government, if I felt inclined to pay assiduous court to the cardinal-legate, and to become a mere machine in the hands of priests. But my father's blood flows in my veins, and you know what effect *education* has had! I am not fallen so low as to seek — or, indeed, accept — favours at the hands of those whom I despise. In all this, tell me, Garofalo, what hope is there for the future? What hope for me, as an honourable man, of ever being able to disclose my deep, devoted love to the daughter of a rich Englishman — an *heiress?*"

"*Ehi!*" ejaculated the professor, raising his eyebrows, as he took a copious pinch of snuff. "*Ci vuole pazienza!* Rome was not built in a day, said the Latins, and you are only laying the foundations of your city as yet. You are young — have life all before you: if the signorina is of your way of thinking, you may both wait ten years. At your age that is nothing; at mine, it is an eternity! Ah! if I were three-and-twenty again, young man, what great things I would do! I would bring out an edition of this book" and he laid his hand on the *Divina Commedia* — "such as no commentator has ever dreamed of! But life is too short now, and I am too poor; so I go on teaching blockheads at a couple of pauls the hour, and my copious notes will enrich some future editor of the divine poet!"

"Speaking of your teaching reminds one of what

I should have told you sooner, Garofalo. I have found you a new scholar. That is my news."

"Good. Who is he?"

"An Englishman who is just arrived in Bologna, where he proposes spending some little time."

"Good again. He must be a man of taste. Most of his countrymen devote twenty-four hours to our city, at most. What is his name? Do you know anything of him?"

"His name is Carr — young, good-looking, and, I suppose, rich. Most Englishmen are. I confess to having felt a prejudice against him, when I was introduced this evening, but I am bound to say that his —"

"Well; but why this prejudice, my friend? Explain."

"A cause scarcely worth mentioning. You know since I found that rascally old Marchese Onofrio and several other younger men following Mrs. Courteney and her daughter in their walks, persecuting them with letters, and trying in other ways to scrape an acquaintance, I have strongly urged their not being out at dusk; and, whenever an opportunity allowed me, I have — I confess to you — followed them at a distance to protect them, in case of any difficulty. I would not have them discover this for the world. It is a secret happiness to me to walk after her, though I do not even hear the sound of her voice..... But days often elapse without my being able to accomplish this. Last evening I learnt that they were

out at an hour when they ought long since to have been home. I went in the direction I found they had taken, and met them. They passed me unnoticed in the shadow of a doorway; and I then perceived that their steps were dogged by a man — evidently an Englishman. Of course I followed, and, at the corner of the street, turned and faced the pursuer. It was this Mr. Carr. What his object was — whether one of *mere* curiosity to discover who his countrywomen were, I cannot tell. On seeing he was watched, of course he gave up the game. You can understand that I was not very agreeably surprised to recognise him this evening."

"How comes it, then, that you, who keep aloof from these gay young *libertini* in general, made his acquaintance?"

"That poor woman, the Onofrio, sent for me to her box for the express purpose, and asked me to be of any use to him I could. One substantial service I rendered him on the spot, which was to recommend you."

"*Ehi!* Guido Lamberti, if we can succeed in making this foreigner understand something of the glories of our literature — if we can make him feel that the land which produced *this* great man" (hand on book again) "and others has still within it the elements of greatness, which only require freedom and opportunity to be developed — we shall have done something! If, on the other hand, he is contended with conjugating the verb '*amare*' and fol-

lowing signorinas in the street, I shall only have to thank you, my friend, for putting so many pauls into my pocket."

"Who can wonder," said the young man, pursuing a train of thought into which the professor's words had led him — "who can wonder at Englishmen forming the estimate of us they generally do, when they learn the condition of education and morals in our upper classes? In such society as I found this Carr to-night — and it was neither better nor worse than two-thirds of that distinguished assemblage — he probably came to the conclusion that we were all good-natured, unprincipled, ignorant idlers. Is he very far wrong? And yet these Razzis and Blanginis, and the rest of them, might become honest and useful citizens of the State under other circumstances. As it is, what chance have we, any of us? Without example, without education, without occupation of any kind — bigots or sceptics — our minds become narrower, and our faith less every day!"

"'*Hanno perduto il ben dell' intelletto*,'" muttered the professor. "Our poet tells us that those who live '*senza infamia e senza lodo*' are to be found in the vestibule of hell!"

"And yet," continued the young man energetically, "who shall say what these men might not become but for this cursed tyranny of priests, stopping up every avenue of light and knowledge, and grinding us down beneath an iron heel?"

"Ah, my son!" said Garofalo, with a sigh, "your cry is an old one. It has been heard for six hundred years and more. Mind you, again, what the immortal Florentine says —

'Ahi gente, che dovresti esser divota,
E lasciar seder Cesar nella sella,
Se bene intendi ciò che Dio ti nota!'

But they will go on sitting upon Cæsar's saddle, and demanding a good deal more than the tribute due unto Cæsar, until they are rudely dragged down. And that day *will* come, my son, though I may not live to see it — never fear. As to this Pio Nono, I have no faith in all his liberal measures!"

"Nor I, if he lets the Jesuits once get round him. They say his confessor is an enlightened man, and the Pope is at present guided by him. The Jesuits will make away with *him*, however, if they find he stands in their way."

"Not so loud, my friend! Though this is your own house, remember that walls have ears!"

"Alas! in this house least of all should I utter anything I would not have overheard. Why, in this holy cause, every cupboard in my mother's room might harbour a priest! Does not the end justify *any* means? She and old Nanna might easily be persuaded it was for my salvation. . . . . But I am no hatcher of Mazzinian plots, as you know, Garofalo. I and my small knot of friends here keep our eyes open, and meet to discuss the progress of events two or three nights a week. We are ready to sacri-

fice all for Italy, when the time is ripe: but we will not endanger the cause of freedom by joining any rash conspiracy. I have nothing, therefore, to dread from Padre Stefano's sharp ears. I openly avow my opinions — but so does every Italian now who is not a Jesuit, or in the pay of Austria."

"Ah! those Austrians!" said the old Italian, with a groan, and he shoveled up a pinch of snuff at the same time, with great virulence. "Those *maledetti Tedeschi!* It never will be well with us, till we get rid of them out of the land, —

'Le terre d'Italia tutte piene
Son di tiranni.'

All our efforts, my son, must be directed *first* towards ridding the country of these white-coated barbarians, before we think of anything else. All reforms in our government must come afterwards."

Their conversation continued on politics for the next half hour. I do not think it would be either profitable or amusing for us to listen to them. As the clock struck twelve, Guido rose.

"Good-night, Garofalo! I will go with you to this Englishman's to-morrow. He proposed coming *here*, but I was anxious he should not do so, — for reasons you may guess."

"*Bene!*" said the professor; and the door had hardly closed before he was back again in the company of his beloved Dante.

CHAPTER V.

The house of Lamberti was a very ancient Bolognese one, which, from a variety of causes, had dwindled by degrees into poverty and obscurity. The last count, at his death, had left his son very little else than that dilapidated palace, with its garden and vineyard, and other dependencies; the revenue produced from which, as has been seen, formed the sole income of the young man and his mother.

The late count had been recklessly extravagant in his youth, but he was not to be classed with the herd of *fainéant* Italian nobles. He felt keenly for the hapless condition of his country; he burned to rouse her from the lethargy in which she was plunged. He had fought with distinction against the French in 1814; but since then had been embroiled more than once with his own government, for he was proud, rash, and impetuous; and his hatred of the priesthood increased as he grew older. At last this gallant gentleman — who, with all his faults, was popular with everyone *except* the priests — died, and left his only son, at the age of fourteen, sole representative of his house.

Guido's most direct inheritance from his father

was his pride. In other respects there was little resemblance between them; and this one quality showed itself differently in two such opposite characters. The hot-tempered man of scanty education and little self-control was proud of his ancient family; could be arrogant in his manner, especially when in contact with the scarlet stockings, and was a little vain, too, perhaps, of his personal prowess in a generation when heroism of any kind was unfortunately rare among Italians. His son's pride, though morbidly sensitive, as we shall see by-and-by, was silent and undemonstrative. His extreme tenderness, too, under a somewhat cold exterior, and his consideration for the feelings of others, were entirely alien to his father's character. They came from the loving wife and mother, though most weak-minded woman, whose efforts had all miserably failed in making the husband happy whom she adored. He respected her, and was never otherwise than kind when they met, but there could be little sympathy between them. Her very virtues were stumbling-blocks in the way; and when that pious soul became, in the course of years, entirely subject to the domination of priests, the separation between the count and his wife was complete. His animosity against the disciples of Ignatius Loyola was louder and more bitter than ever. Still in all but spiritual matters she obeyed him implicitly, and would have testified to the world her grief at his death by entering a convent, had it not been for her boy. To him she had transferred

all her carnal affections, poor lady! and, in spite of every mortification of the flesh, she found they still clung tenderly to this one earthly object.

In more manly shape this capacity for strong and deep attachment manifested itself in Guido. His father had been little tolerant of his wife's weakness: the son, while he had an equal horror of priestly influence, and strove to counteract it in every possible way, never abated in his patient devotion to his mother. His life was so unlike that of most young men, that, as we have seen, the poor devotee and her old serving-maid had grown somewhat unreasonable in their expectations. Not that he ever spent the evening in his mother's room; the constant recurrence of the one subject uppermost in her thoughts rendering any protracted conversation impossible to Guido, even had not the hourly prayer and meditation enjoined by Padre Stefano precluded the poor lady from any lengthened enjoyment in her son's society. Guido's room adjoined his mother's, and indeed opened into it by a sliding panel: but this he rarely used, preferring to go round by the ante-room, and face his spiritual enemies boldly at the door. She liked to know that he was in his room, with his books, within call, and out of "harm's way." She could then call the padre's attention with some pardonable pride to her son's studious and exemplary life. But latterly there had been a falling off. "Harm's way" was the way of all republicans and free-thinkers in Church matters: and into this

the padre said with great severity that Guido was falling deeper every day. It was rare, indeed, that he spent the entire evening from home, as on this occasion, when he had been tempted inside the walls of the opera; but some portion of each was generally passed either at his small *circolo*, or with the Courteneys. This was unpardonable. Had he broken loose in a course of the wildest profligacy, more hopes might have been entertained of him; but now his ultimate perdition was shown to be a mathematical certainty. Guido fought the priest with the unerring blade of truth: only as to his friends and their opinions he maintained an impenetrable reserve. The most vigilant espionage had failed hitherto in detecting anything of a treasonable nature in the intercourse of these young men. Lamberti's presence was their great support. He was known to disapprove of conspiracies; and he always openly declared that if Italy was to be regenerated, it must be by the solemn, energetic will of the people, not by the plots and intrigues of a few individuals. Thus, although he was regarded as a "dangerous character," the boldness and uprightness of the young aristocrat not only turned aside his enemies' deadliest thrusts, but served, in a manner, to shield his associates.

But there was one subject upon which, excepting with his old and valued friend Garofalo, he never spoke — this English family, whose acquaintance he had made at Turin some years previously, when

sent there to spend a year with his aunt, and to whom he rendered some slight service — I forget what — which entailed an acquaintance. This family of Courteneys had now been some months in the Casa Lamberti. The intimacy of boyhood had been renewed; the circumstance of both being under one roof tending very naturally to this result. Guido had long ago broken through the ice of reserve which Mr. Courteney maintained with the world in general — at least upon all public topics connected with Italy, and on classical and general literature, that gentleman discussed points with the young Italian, and evidently had some respect for his character and abilities. As regarded himself, and everything that related to England, Mr. Courteney was as studiously silent with Guido as with the rest of the world. And in this respect only his wife resembled him. She had always had an affection for the handsome, intelligent Italian boy: now that he was grown to man's estate, she found all her hopes fulfilled. He, and the old professor, whose society Mr. Courteney seemed to like, had a general invitation to spend their evenings with the English family. Guido often looked in for an hour or two: but during the day they never met. There was nothing, therefore, to proclaim the fact of this increasing intimacy to the world in general — but it grew apace. Leading the stern life of self-denial the Italian had hitherto done — knowing little of woman's society save that of the two aged ones in his own wing of the palace

— it was natural that the fair, gentle English girl should impress the young man's heart and imagination in a way none of the Italian ladies of his acquaintance were able to do. Many of them were no doubt handsomer, but they had neither her grace nor refinement. The simple, untutored expression of her natural sentiments, so different from the demure convent manners of the few unmarried women he knew, was in itself an inexpressible charm to the young man. Like all strong natures that have been much shut up within themselves, his seemed to expand under the influence of its first passion. Not that he ever said much — he preferred to watch and listen to her. But what had lain dormant in him before — the sap of his inward being, so to speak — rose and filled every member with new life. To his devotion as a son, to his high aspirations as an Italian, was now added the passionate love of a man hitherto ignorant of the deep-hidden fire which had been kindled gradually within him.

Alas! almost simultaneously with this passion grew the conviction that it was all but hopeless the object of it should ever be his.

This was the one secret which, like a miser over his hidden treasure, he dreaded should be dragged to light. In all else, candour and fearlessness; but not in this. He dreaded the priests: and he dreaded his own heart even more. He imposed on himself additional restraints: diminished his

evening visits, under some pretence or other, to one or two a week, and fed on *her* image more and more in his heart the less he saw her.

His precautions had succeeded in blinding Padre Stefano hitherto: so much was gained. Madame Lamberti's spiritual adviser might inveigh against her son's heretic friend; but in his knowledge of impulsive Italian nature, it never entered into the priest's calculations that a young man should exercise sufficient command over himself not to render his love apparent if it existed.

Guido's sole confidant, as I have said, was the professor. His upright character and shrewd intellect, not less than their identity of feeling on many important subjects, had drawn the young man towards him soon after the former had emerged from boyhood. They had read and discussed together as master and pupil: the youth's ill-digested ideas on many subjects had hardened into definite principle under the professor's training; and now, as friend with friend, they conversed openly on all subjects. Garofalo's intimacy with the Courteney family, in which he gave daily lessons, and with whom he constantly spent an evening in expounding Dante, had given him opportunities of observing Guido when in Miss Courteney's society; and it is possible that the shrewd man of letters, while apparently absorbed in his book, suspected the state of Guido's heart, ere the count was aware of it himself. However this may be, such a state of things could not go on long

without a tacit understanding arising between them, which gradually widened into confession, sympathy, and advice. That the professor thought his friend's case sufficiently hopeless, may be inferred from his cheerfully recommending him to wait for ten years. Ten years! to a young fellow in love! But with his knowledge of life, its shifting impressions, and the power of time to soften all, the commentator upon Dante offered, perhaps, the kindest and wisest advice in his power.

Having now endeavoured in some degree to elucidate the actual and relative positions of four of the dwellers in the Casa Lamberti, we will proceed with the narrative of events which followed the conversations detailed in the last chapter.

To return to Laurence Carr. The morning after the opera he was ready to declare the society of Bologna to be uncommonly pleasant, and the Marchesa Onofrio one of the most delightful people he had ever met. That little supper-party of five, when they all smoked cigarettes, and Tasca sang so deliciously from the *Trovatore*, and Ortolani told those amusing (though *rather* equivocal) anecdotes — why, he felt in ten minutes as if he had lived among them all his life! This was something *like* society. This was rather a different matter to the pompous, silver-tureen festivities at Carrlyon: yea, and the nine o'clock banquets of Belgrave Square. There was some fun in *this*. People could be natural here; and make themselves pleasant to you, without inquiring

your rent-roll. As to that marchesa, she certainly was an uncommonly attractive woman. Such frank, unaffected manners, such a genial sense of humour and pathos, and such a warm heart! Decidedly the society of Bologna was agreeable for a *bachelor*, at all events.

As Laurence rolled lazily from side to side in bed, the ten o'clock sun streaming in upon the yellow eider-down quilt, and Giuseppe announcing for the third time that his hot water for shaving was ready, — as our English hero, I say, lay in this position, he felt in tolerably good humour with himself and the rest of the world. His reflections hung together somewhat in the shape I have noted down above, and he found no difficulty in making up his mind to remain at Bologna — until he should become tired of it. Besides the attraction of that pleasant, *sans-façon* society into which he had been introduced, there was a yet stronger inducement to stay where he was — a phantom which thrust itself forward so pertinaciously across other wholly disconnected thoughts, that he smiled in spite of himself at the fascination this idea exercised over him. When Giuseppe saw that smile, he gave up the game. No Florence for three months at least! That, as far as his experience went, was the limit allotted to human love.

In the afternoon, Carr made a point of being at his hotel when Guido and the professor called. Of this visit I need say nothing, but that the prelimi-

naries for Carr's taking a lesson every morning in the professor's room at the Casa Lamberti were arranged. The professor, indeed, at first objected that his room was small, and he hesitated about receiving Carr; but the latter so absolutely insisted on this point, and brought forward such a number of recondite reasons why lessons given in hotels never could be profitable, that the professor was obliged to yield; while he looked at Guido, and shrugged his eyebrows and shoulders simultaneously. The latter was more silent than he often was in his friend's society, as the two Italians trod the arcade together on their way back to the Casa Lamberti.

CHAPTER VI.

In that small ground-floor apartment, with its one window open to the garden, sat the professor and his new pupil.

The vine-leaves, which had formed so thick a curtain round the window a month before, were now few and yellow, and the branches, stripped of their purple burdens, trailed dry and broken along the wall, or flapped against the dim, greenish window-pane in the November wind. In front, there was an open space, where the *pozzo*, or well, stood, and where some earthenware jars and pitchers indicated that here the household came to draw water. There were two aloes in stone pots, and a green lizard lying out in the only sunny bit of terrace which the shadow of the house did not yet cross: and then beyond, came the *pergola*, or trellised walls of vine, no longer an impervious green shelter from the still powerful mid-day sun. The farther end of this walk was terminated by a low wall, which looked over the river into the olive-gardens, and vineyards, and villages of the far-stretching valley. Against this wall grew a pomegranate; and upon the top of the wall stood a few pots of geraniums, in virtue of which I suppose it obtained its title of garden, for

other flowers there were none. Fragments of balustrade, however, and four grand old cypress-trees in either corner of the enclosure, showed what a stately, well-cared-for place this pleasant wilderness once was.

Over the low garden-wall I have mentioned leant two young girls. The tall fair one we have seen before; but who is the other? — a very graceful figure of middle height, with a profusion of black waving hair, and a small sallow face, lit up with the most wonderful eyes and teeth. Excitement, too, as we shall see by-and-by, can lend to this singular countenance a brilliancy of colouring and an intensity of expression which might make any painter, at least, call it beautiful. But beautiful in a quiescent state, and to an ordinary observer, it is not — least of all in its expression at such times. And if physiognomy be any indication of character, it must be when in repose. Those involuntary truth-telling lines into which nature falls, letting drop the mask of conventionality for a while, carry more knowledge with them than is to be gained even in moments of strong emotion. In this instance, the lines are decidedly bad. The passionate dilation of the nostril, the sensuality of the lower lip, and the nervous contraction of the brow, do not impress one favourably. Whatever fascination the young lady possesses must be exercised by the substitution of a very different expression when the mask is on, and by the charm of a singularly rich musical voice,

and by the use of considerable cleverness combined with a powerful will.

With their conversation we have nothing to do at this moment. Whether either of them spoke as they leant over the garden-wall, plucking a dead geranium-leaf now and then, and letting it drop into the river below, is unimportant. They formed a picturesque contrast defined against the blue sky, and the young gentleman who was watching them thought so. He had been watching them, so far as Messieurs Virgil and Dante would permit him, for the last quarter of an hour. The descent of those worthies to the lower regions offered some obstructions to this study; but what with the obscure words and obsolete forms of writing, he found in every line opportunities of looking out of window in quest of a translation. Then there were religious and historical allusions to be explained by the professor; during which time his pupil gazed with a perplexed air straight at the *pergola*, as though he were wholly absorbed in disentangling the poet's web.

At last his patience was exhausted — he could restrain himself no longer; and after casting about in vain for some way of leading naturally to the point he had in view, he abruptly broke into —

"I beg your pardon, Signor Garofalo, but who are those young ladies?"

"Do you not know?" said the professor, with a shrewd twinkle of the eye. "They are countrywomen of yours — the taller one at all events. She

is Mr. Courteney's daughter. '*Quel giorno più non vi leggemmo avanti*,'" he muttered as he closed the book; but the quotation and its application were equally lost on the Englishman.

"And the other, — the dark one — who is she?"

"Hè!" replied Garofalo, crossing his legs, and resigning himself to the catechism which he saw now had driven Dante ignominiously from the field for that morning. "*Chi lo sa, signore?* — who knows? A companion and friend of Miss Courteney's. Her name is Gisborne; but whether she is English or not, it is hard to say. She speaks Italian like a native, and German equally well, I understand."

"And Miss Courteney; — you know her family, no doubt, well — as you live in the same house?"

"I give the signorina lessons."

"No brother, or other sisters, I think, you said?"

The professor did not recollect having stated the fact, but he corroborated the assumption.

"Do you know what part of England they come from? There are Courteneys in my county. I wonder whether they are any relations."

The professor shrugged his shoulders, for all reply.

"They have not been here many months, I believe. Do you know if they have been long abroad?"

"Apparently for many years. They seem to

have travelled in all parts of Europe. They left Rome, Signor Courteney told me, on account of the numbers of English. They were there a very short time."

"Do you mean that he positively objects to meet any of his own countrymen?" inquired Laurence, indignantly, as though he personally were affronted.

"I don't know that: but he is a peculiar man, and shuns general society. Among his own nation, this is, of course, more difficult than it is among foreigners. One of Bologna's chief attractions, I believe, to Signor Courteney, was there being no English here."

"That I can understand as a rule; still, there are exceptions to be made. I suppose he has, then, absolutely no acquaintance among Italians here?"

"None but his landlord, Count Lamberti, and myself; though some of our best families, contrary to their custom with strangers, have shown themselves disposed to make their acquaintance."

"Is Count Lamberti intimate in the family?" pursued the indefatigable questioner.

Garofalo was puzzled how to reply. He took refuge in a copious pinch of snuff.

"He knew them long ago, when he was a boy, but it is difficult for any one to be *intimate* with Signor Courteney," he said, adroitly evading the question. "He is a taciturn man, though not without learning, and much knowledge of the world acquired at some time or other of his life."

This was not exactly what Carr wished to dis-

cover, but he hardly thought it safe to push his inquiries in that line, for fear of betraying his real motives. At the same moment the two girls left their station at the wall, and came slowly back under the pergola in the direction of the house. Charming as Laurence had thought that fair young head in its black bonnet and veil, it was doubly so now, with the wind lifting the light brown hair, unsheltered by aught save the small parasol she held. The movement of her well-poised figure, so admirably displayed in the simple tight-fitting dress she wore, seemed characteristic of health, and gaiety, and innocence. So Carr thought. Her step was firm and free, her cheek flushed with the morning wind. She caroled a snatch of some popular air every now and then; and every now and then she raised her arm to the trellis above to reach a vine-leaf which had remained green longer than its companions. Joyous and careless as a bird she came along, utterly unmindful of the fact that every movement could be observed from the windows of the west wing of the palace. It is probable that some such consideration did occur to her companion. Her face underwent a complete and rapid transformation: the large eyes were lowered, and an air of voluptuous pensiveness, so to speak, pervaded her figure as she advanced languidly. Once, and once only, she looked up, and her eye ran rapidly along the windows. A moment after the girls turned an angle of the garden and were out of sight.

"Signor Garofalo," said Carr, abruptly, "will you convey a message to Mr. Courteney, with my compliments? I receive *The Times* newspaper here as regularly as the post-office authorities will allow me. He may like to hear a little more English news than he can get from the *Monitore*, and, if so, I shall be very happy to send him my paper every day."

The professor gravely inclined his head.

"I will convey your message, signore."

That was a happy thought of Carr's! — a transparent design, perhaps, but one which could hardly fail to produce the desired result. This old Courteney could not be so absurd as to refuse the polite offer of a newspaper; and an acquaintance, in the natural course of things, must gradually ensue. He who wrote so much in his letters home about the charm of getting rid of all English society, now, with an inconsistency by no means rare, declared it was not to be tolerated that the only two Englishmen living in a foreign town should be strangers to each other. He was much occupied with the thought all that day, and kept laying down little trains of hypothetical circumstances to be fired after the reception of the first *Times* paper. The image of that fair face haunted him, with its wind-blown hair and clear, truthful eyes. He beheld it, like Owen Meredith's young lady, "in a dim box over the stage," that same evening, as he sat making himself agreeable to the Onofrio. He was not given to dreaming,

but he saw it distinctly in his sleep that night, passing and repassing before him; and in the postscript of a letter to his mother the following morning, he could not resist saying, "There is a family of the name of Courteney here — a father, mother, and daughter. Tell me whether you know anything of them."

When he, an hour or two afterwards, entered the professor's room with *The Times* in his hand, the latter smiled, and, after shaking hands with his pupil, said, —

"Signor Courteney returns you his compliments, and declines your polite offer. He says he cares nothing for the politics of his country, and never wishes to see an English newspaper again."

It was very ridiculous, I admit, but Laurence Carr was irritated; and I fear he betrayed it to the sharp eyes of the Italian teacher. There was no other way of accounting for the petty impatience and the remarkable stupidity of that intelligent young Englishman during the whole lesson. He positively couldn't construe a line. The unhappy enthusiast about the Divine Comedy subsequently declared to Guido that he had never passed such a hopeless morning over a canto in his life!

That he, so popular, so sought after in the best London society, not only for certain worldly advantages which he possessed, but, as he might reasonably flatter himself, for certain personal ones, — that he should take the trouble of coming all the

way to Bologna to be snubbed by a trumpery travelling Englishman, — it was really too much! Had it been an Italian who so met his advances, he could have stood it better. Foreigners were not bound to know that the Carrs of Carrlyon were one of the oldest families in the North.

"But after all," whispered that inward voice which will make itself heard, "the man has a right to choose his own acquaintance, I suppose; and if he won't know me, why I don't see how I can force him." "Yes, I can, and I will," said Obstinacy. "I never was conquered yet in anything I chose to undertake; and I have set my mind upon knowing that girl. I am resolved to accomplish it. It may be ridiculous. Of course, I know there are heaps of better-looking women in England; and many a man in my place would say I was a fool not to devote myself to the fair marchesa here, instead of wasting my time in running after a shadow. I don't care. I can only prove that it *is* a shadow — the idea I have conceived of that girl's charm — by making her acquaintance. I'll do it, cost what it may."

Several days passed, without any opportunity for the furtherance of Carr's wishes, but also without any diminution in the fixedness of his determination. He did not even see Miss Courteney, and he found an evident disinclination on the part of the professor to enter again upon the subject of the family. But he was not discouraged. He continued going nightly into Italian society, and very pleasant it was; but

the days were almost entirely given up to wanderings round the neighbourhood of the Lamberti palace, in twilight visits to the church where he first beheld the sweet face which had haunted him ever since.

His efforts to improve his acquaintance with Guido Lamberti were not more successful, and his curiosity respecting the Italian, and the exact footing he was on in the Courteney family was still unsatisfied. Lamberti had, indeed, been as good as his word in giving Carr every information in his power touching pictures, historical monuments and records, not seen by strangers in general. The only thing he would not give was his society. He excused himself when Carr asked him to dinner; and as it was clear that capacity was less concerned in the refusal than inclination, the would-be Amphitryon had pride enough not to renew the invitation.

Under these unpromising circumstances, his only ally and auxiliary was the fat little porter of Casa Lamberti. This functionary, in consideration of certain *scudi* judiciously bestowed, informed Carr — with more or less accuracy — what the "famiglia Inglese" had done or proposed doing daily. The gentleman was lame, and they drove nearly every afternoon. Then Carr learnt one day that Guido and the professor had spent the previous evening with the family; and upon another occasion, to his disgust, that they had been at the opera the night before, while he had sat above them, talking nonsense

in the Onofrio's box, unconscious of their presence! Decidedly the porter was a valuable acquaintance; but he did not always tend to promote our friend's good humour.

Carr grew desperate. Great evils require strong remedies; but though the compassionate reader I hope will feel the cruelty of Carr's position, I have my doubts whether the remedy in this case will appear altogether justifiable; unless he, the reader, happens to be a sanguine young man of five-and-twenty, with the organ of conscientiousness singularly undeveloped.

A communication was made to Carr one morning as he entered the gate of the Casa Lamberti, the result of which must be detailed in another chapter.

CHAPTER VII.

Laurence Carr returned at once to his hotel, leaving a message for Professor Garofalo, to the effect that he was unavoidably prevented taking his lesson that morning.

Giuseppe looked up rather astonished at his master's unexpected return to his room. The little man was at the dressing-table in the act of transferring some *eau-de-Portugal* to his own person: but he bore the shock without visible confusion; nature, in anticipation of such little peccadillos, probably having provided him with a complexion that could not blush. His master took no notice, being full of the scheme on hand, and of the idea that he was about, for the first time in his life, to make an accomplice of his man-servant. He felt like one of the heroes in Mrs. Centlivre's old-fashioned comedies; only with a slight awkwardness as to commencing the dialogue which none of those worthies ever experienced.

"Look here, Giuseppe — make no remark — mind you! but do just what I tell you: do you hear? First of all, order the best and largest carriage you can find, with the strongest horses, to be here in an hour's time to take me to the Villa del Monte. Then

you will go to this address" (here he handed him a paper); "much now — much depends on your executing this commission cleverly. You will then find out the driver of a carriage which is ordered this afternoon for an English family living at the Casa Lamberti. You will make him understand that he is to conduct this party in safety to the spot they order him, and that, when *there*, it is *necessary* his carriage should break down. The springs may break, or the wheel come off, or anything else he likes, but he must render it impossible for the carriage to be mended on the spot. Offer him what you choose, but don't leave him till he consents; do you understand? eh?"

"*Sicuro*, *signore*," replied Giuseppe, with the air of a man who has been accustomed to arrange accidents all his life; then added, in his bad, but voluble French, "and I suppose I may bargain separately for silence? beforehand, that is, for afterwards his lips will be sealed fast enough, in fear of his master finding him out."

"I give you *carte blanche* to make what bargain you like; only let the matter be cleverly managed, and not a syllable of it breathed. I'll pay, of course, every expense that is incurred, and protect the fellow if he gets into any trouble. I leave the affair in your hands, Giuseppe; now go, and make haste."

Carr spent the intervening hour in preparing his portfolio and sketching materials, and whistling in

his excitement like a shrill mackaw, as he strode about the room waiting for Giuseppe's return.

He came, and all was satisfactorily settled. The driver was declared to be manageable and intelligent: there was no difficulty or risk. Half an hour afterwards Carr was rolling along, the sole occupant of a spacious, open britska, on the road to Pianora.

It was a long drive, lying along the fertile undulating Æmilian plain, till the road reached the foot of the Apennines, where it began to ascend. The Villa was situated some distance off the main road upon the side of the bare brown hill, up which waggons and oxen had worn a deep-rutted track. During the *villeggiatura*, this was a favourite drive of the Bolognese, on account of its fine view and the cool invigorating breeze that comes swirling round those billowy crests of mountain, intensely purple in the distance, tawny in the foreground, nowhere rising into positive grandeur, but having in their horizontal formation a distinctive character from all other mountain scenery. The eye requires as much apprenticeship to the olive as the palate does. Its cold gray-green foliage produces a disagreeable effect to English eyes habituated to forests of oak and beech and elm; and here, as Carr looked round, the only vegetation consisted of a few of these stunted trees crawling up the hillside, which was scattered with loose gray stones. As he approached the Villa, indeed, the remains of an avenue of

venerable cypresses stood up in solid pillars of green to refresh the eye, and with their dark blue shadows flung across the path, served as a haven of rest to the sight in that mountain sea. Few of these relics of a far-off day survived to recall the time when the villa — now tenanted by olive-dressers only — was the feudal residence of some great noble, who probably often rode down that avenue with his stately cavalcade. Traces of a terraced garden belonging to the same date yet remained in the broken balustrade and fish-pond, long since dried up and overgrown with reeds and briars. Here, where some fair Bolognese lady may have sat and fed the carp on summer evenings, listening to one of the novels which Messire Boccaccio had lately given forth from that rival city over the blue mountains yonder, and where the golden sunsets no doubt fell upon many a joyous group seated, in the velvet splendours of that day, with fruit and mandolin and music — here, where the lust of the eyes and the pride of life reigned absolutely once, Nature had again asserted her sway. The garden, save such small portions as were reclaimed for the uses of the farmer's family who occupied the villa, was a desert. Some tattered, sun-burnt children were playing on a great heap of Indian corn near the door, and stared in wide-eyed wonder as Laurence approached. These, and some lean, conceited-looking poultry, who seemed by their bearing to consider any presence but their own on the place an intrusion, were the only living objects

Carr beheld. Probably all the larger and more industrious portion of the establishment, master and man, women and oxen, were out at work in the fields.

Laurence wandered round in search of a picturesque spot, and finally fixed on one which commanded a view of the entire plain: Bologna, with its many campaniles and two leaning towers, in the middle ground; Modena, Ferrara, and even Milan, distinguishable as cloud-specks in the distance. From this point, the road Carr had just traversed was necessarily seen for a long distance, till the undulations of the plain, with its vine and olive gardens, hid it. Carr set himself industriously to draw the extensive panorama before him, though no subject could be less in his line, artistically speaking. He had the satisfaction, however, of seeing one or two of the principal points already sketched in, before the dark spot which he knew to be a carriage, became visible on the dusty road.

The next half-hour was one of nervous impatience. Carr endeavoured to fix his attention upon the group of belfries with the line of purple mountain behind them, but his eye constantly wandered back to that ever-increasing speck upon the road, until it assumed the aspect of a crazy-looking vehicle dragged by two jaded horses up the stony hill-side. A minute more, and it had arrived; the three ladies it contained having walked up the hill, while an elderly gentleman alone retained his seat. Carr

heard the familiar buzz of English voices behind him: they had entered the garden. He would not look up, but drew away more vigorously than ever.

"It is a great shame," said the gentleman, "to have given us such a wretched carriage and such bad horses, to-day, of all other days, when we were going this long drive. I should have turned back but for you, Gilda. You seemed to have set your heart on coming."

Here was a lucky escape from the failure of all his schemes! and here too a happy augury: her "heart was set on coming!" The next speech or two Carr lost, but the party drew near the terraced walk where he sat. The elder lady exclaimed,

"What a glorious view! This repays one for anything, Courteney; and the drive back will be much easier for those poor horses."

"Look, mamma: there is a man sketching; only think of our finding any one up here! And how very like an Englishman his back looks. I see they all wear those rough brown jackets. Shouldn't you like to see what he is doing? I should, so much. Perhaps he is a poor artist, papa, and you might buy something, as you did at —"

"Hush! don't talk so loud," said the gentleman, speaking himself in a remarkably clear voice. "You forget how easily every word is heard. It might really be an Englishman. Miss Gisborne, oblige me by telling the driver to bring the plaids and cushions

out here; the sun is warm enough to sit awhile and rest, after that horrible shaking."

"Here comes the driver, sir," said a deep woman's voice.

"But what is the matter with him? Look, how he throws his eyes about, and clasps his hands! One would say the man had gone mad!"

From this point the dialogue was carried on in rapid Italian; and had Carr not been prepared for the substance of it, the greater portion, probably, would have been lost on him. First, of course, every saint in the calendar was invoked by the vociferous driver to witness that it was not his fault; but would the English nobleman, whose humble servant he was, believe it? The most extraordinary accident had happened. In taking out his horses to feed, the carriage had been turned too short, and upset, and one of the springs was broken.

"Broken!" almost shouted Mr. Courteney. "What do you mean? This is some trick of yours, *birbone* that you are, to get money out of me. I know you all, a set of rascals! The thing is impossible. Upset in the yard? I don't believe it!"

"The Holy Virgin punish me, signore, if I am not saying the truth! Come and see. The spring is broken; if the signore can mend it, so much the better.

"Why, good heavens! how are we to get back?" said Mrs. Courteney. "Do you mean that we can't use the carriage to get back to Bologna?"

"Eh! *che vuole?* Vostri signori can't go with a broken spring: and there is no one here can mend it."

"I repeat," said the gentleman angrily, "this is some rascally trick of yours to keep us here. You are in league with the people of this place; but, mark my words now, if I don't —"

"Signore, excellent signore!" whimpered the Italian so effectively, that Carr nearly laughed outright. "Do not be hard upon a poor, honest fellow. What trick would you have me play you? There is another stranger up here, appeal to *him*, signore. Perhaps he is returning to Bologna, and would send you out another carriage before night-fall?"

"Night-fall!" cried the lady. "Why, Courteney, it will kill you to be out so late! What is to be done?"

There was a murmured consultation which Laurence could not catch, and was interrupted in a humble manner by the driver.

"*Scusi*, *signore*, but this stranger is alone, and his carriage is large, much larger than mine. He might —"

"Hold your tongue, sir. You want to stay here, that's the fact of the matter," said the gentleman once more. "It's impossible, quite impossible, to ask a stranger to take a whole family in his carriage in that way."

"Well, but papa!" rang the sweet, clear voice of his daughter in English, "there would be nothing

in asking him to take *you*. Women are different, you know; but he couldn't object to do any act of Christian charity for another man, and in your state of health; and we could remain up here very contentedly till you send out another carriage for us."

This was the moment for Carr to step forward. The last suggestion threatened to upset all his plans. He was seated about fifty yards from where the party stood, and on a lower range of terrace. He jumped up, and came towards the group, raising his hat as he approached.

"Pardon me, I am an Englishman — a visitor like yourself here. I have just overheard the dilemma you are in, and I beg to assure you there are four places in my carriage very much at your service. I could not think of allowing you to separate your party, and my carriage is a very large one — much too large for a solitary man."

The gentleman he addressed leant heavily on a stick, and was evidently lame. He was a man of fifty-five or sixty, perhaps; slight and pale, with grey hair, and must have been handsome in his youth, but sickness had wasted the face beyond its years, and rendered it gaunt and hollow. He coloured as Laurence spoke, and bowed stiffly; and while he hesitated in his reply the elder lady said quickly,

"We cannot afford to refuse this gentleman's very kind offer, Courteney; indeed, I don't know

how we should get back without it, from this very retired spot."

Then Mr. Courteney said slowly,

"I find it difficult, sir, to express the extreme reluctance I feel in putting a stranger to such inconvenience."

"Oh, not at all. Don't mention it," exclaimed the other, in an off-hand manner. "I assure you it will be quite a pleasure. Charming place this, ain't it?"

"First, before taking advantage of your politeness," continued Mr. Courteney, without noticing this appeal, "Miss Gisborne, and Gilda, will you go and look at the actual state of our carriage, and see if the fellow is telling the truth. It may be only a matter for a piece of cord, after all.

"Allow me to inspect it," said Carr. "I understand something more of springs and axles perhaps than these young ladies do."

Mr. Courteney begged that he would not trouble himself, but the two ladies had already turned towards the gate, and Carr lost no time in following them.

"I am afraid we must pronounce the verdict of 'an unsound body,'" he observed, as they stood before the prostrate carriage, and stooping down he examined the spring, which was most effectually broken. "The constitution of the vehicle, however, must have been in a very impaired state, and its

breaking now probably saved you from an accident on the road home." (Oh, Carr!)

"It seems to me a very unaccountable occurrence," said Miss Gisborne. "I never can believe the carriage slipped down into that hole by *accident*."

The young lady's piercing eyes looked full at him, and Carr felt the colour rise to his cheek. Miss Courteney's words were a relief.

"Well, Pietro will be disappointed if he expected to keep us here. We ought to be exceedingly grateful to you," she added, turning frankly to Laurence; "for my father's health is such that exposure to the damp of the plain when the sun is down might be fatal to him. But I am afraid we shall crowd you."

It was worth going through a good deal to hear that sweet, guileless voice say she was "grateful" to him, Carr thought, though he knew how little he deserved it. He replied, however, with perfect presence of mind —

"Oh! if that was all, I could easily walk back. The distance is nothing, and the road straight; one couldn't mistake it. I can assure you I should infinitely prefer walking the distance any number of times to leaving you here" — (Miss Gisborne kept running those black eyes through and through him) — "you and this other young lady, with the chance of meeting with some disagreeable adventure."

"I should not be the least afraid of being left

here, or of walking home alone: I have the most perfect confidence in all Italians."

"Far be it from me to shake it," returned Laurence, smiling; "but this is an old-fashioned country, and practices which have become obsolete elsewhere are still in vogue. It is a mere matter of habit, I dare say — highway robbery and abduction; still it does not conduce to a feeling of security in the English breast, and you know we have heard of such things quite lately. It was only last week that —"

"Oh! if you judge of a whole nation from a newspaper story or two — probably all concocted — I have nothing to say," returned the young lady, somewhat warmly; adding, with true feminine inconsistency, "though is it to be wondered at, when they are ground down by the priests, and see their families starving, that they should do anything to get money? An ignorant, penniless man can only take to the road."

"*Or the Church*, in more senses than one. My pocket was picked at Milan cathedral by the most devout individual, who never stopped saying his prayers."

"How shocking!" said Miss Courteney; "but we are very Italian; we have lived here so long: you must not abuse the people to us, please, we are so fond of them."

There was not much in her words; it was the child-like readiness with which she "made friends"

at once: a simplicity as far removed from the forwardness of a fast young lady as from the *mauvaise honte* of a school-girl. It was a manner to which Laurence was not much accustomed, and while satisfying his fastidious taste by its unaffected grace, it had the charm of novelty and surprise. Not so the manners of her companion: in spite of her rich musical voice and her brilliant eyes, there was that about her which was disagreeable to Carr. Besides, she was evidently too sharp — he was more than half afraid that she suspected him.

"I will go and see that the horses are put into my carriage; the afternoon is far advanced, and I am afraid Mr. Courteney —" (he stopped for an instant, confused by that black diamond glance) — "for I believe it *is* Mr. Courteney's daughter whom I have the honour of addressing?"

"Yes. How did you know papa's name?"

"By visiting the Casa Lamberti daily, where I take lessons of your friend, Professor Garofalo."

"Oh, then you are the gentleman he spoke to us about? Sir Carr he called you. We are so fond of him. You know *one* good specimen of an Italian, at all events: such a fine, generous-hearted old man, and so clever."

"He is; and I like him much, in spite of his always quoting Dante at me, which I don't half understand. But you mustn't suppose I don't like Italians. Those I know seem good fellows, and are pleasant enough for half-an-hour; but, really, only

half educated. Their ignorance, indeed, is absolutely refreshing, in an age when every one knows everything so dreadfully well."

"You would find some exceptions to that rule," replied Miss Courteney, quietly; but there was a shade of annoyance across her brow.

"I suppose that this, like their standard of right and wrong, and everything else, is to be attributed to the priests," pursued Carr, as they turned back towards the terrace. "Everything, I find, is laid upon the *Neri* — those *black* sheep; their backs must be very broad to bear the burdens cast upon them."

"I understand nothing of politics or religion," said the girl, simply. "I only know I love Italy and Italians, and I don't like to hear them abused."

It was but a passing cloud, followed by uninterrupted sunshine during the remainder of that afternoon. Carr was more cautious in the expression of his decided opinions upon Italy; and while he conversed pleasantly on topics of general interest, he forbore to make any allusions which might have been distasteful. They had rejoined Mr. and Mrs. Courteney; and all the party (with the exception of the elder gentleman) wandered down to the lower terrace and examined Carr's sketch, and looked at all the distant points of the landscape through his strong racing-glasses; and then, at last, Carr's coachman appeared, to say the carriage was ready. While Mrs. Courteney and her daughter returned to

assist the invalid man, Carr went forward to deposit his sketching-stool and umbrella on the coach-box. As he passed under the archway, a man with a broad grin on his countenance came up, —

"*Spero che vostra signoria è contento di me?*"

Carr frowned and made a sign to the man, muttering the only Italian oath in his vocabulary. He heard a rustle, and turned. Sara Gisborne's dark eyes gleamed under the archway on him.

He walked swiftly on without saying a word. It was provoking. However, he had gained his point — his first step, and must now push forward his advantages, so as to prevent this girl's suspicions or prejudices, if they existed, from taking effect against him.

When Mr. Courteney limped up, leaning on a stick and his daughter's arm, it was evident that, in the interval, she had told him Carr's name; for he at once said, with that peculiarly rigid politeness which characterized him —

"I find, sir, that I am already indebted to you for an act of courtesy not usual among our countrymen when strangers to each other. I am myself," he added, with an acid smile, "beyond the average type of British *sauvagerie*. I make no new acquaintances, and confess that I do not willingly lay myself under an obligation to a stranger. After saying so much, Mr. Carr, I must add that I feel greatly indebted for the service you are now rendering us,

and beg you to accept the gratitude of a churlish Englishman."

There was something so singular in the gentleman's manner that Carr felt rather disconcerted, as he handed the ladies into the carriage.

"Oh! Mr. Carr," said Mrs. Courteney, seeing that he was about to jump on the coach-box, "we cannot think of allowing you to be there. Come, Gilda, sit between us. Why, the carriage is a perfect ark; it would hold several more, I believe; and I should be miserable all the way home at the idea of turning you out of your own carriage. By-the-by, I wonder how poor Pietro is to get back with the broken vehicle."

"Poor Pietro," remarked Miss Sara, with all apparent innocence, "will find his own way back. He seems to think it a good joke. I see him watching us behind that door, and laughing."

"The impudent scoundrel! I'll take care he has no *buona mano*," said Mr. Courteney.

That long, delicious drive! who shall describe it? Sitting opposite the sweetest face he had ever looked upon — listening to her fresh, unsophisticated remarks on all sorts of subjects — making the clear young laugh ring with anecdotes of that world he knew so well, and she knew so little — watching the fleeting expressions of her face, which, like a sensitive plant, expanded and shrank up before the genial or grave impressions which his conversation produced — he would not have exchanged his

position just then for a throne! Everything was propitious: Mr. Courteney listened, and watched, and seldom spoke; Mrs. Courteney conversed freely, when the subject was not England, which she evidently avoided mentioning; and through the indefinable melancholy which never left her eyes, and certain tones of her voice, there penetrated a genial nature that probably was once as buoyant as her daughter's. Her remarks were not particularly clever, but her perception seemed acute, and the balance of her judgment weighed very heavily on the side of gentleness and charity. The other occupant of the carriage took no part in the conversation, and Carr would almost have forgotten her existence, had it not been for those eyes which mesmerised him every now and then, in spite of himself. He then became uncomfortably conscious that a sallow girl was sitting next him, drinking in every word, every look he gave forth, and drawing her own deductions therefrom. But the charm of that society was too great to suffer much from so slight a drawback. It was with a feeling of unmingled sorrow that he saw the carriage drive under the great gateway of Bologna, and that the black arcaded streets took the place of glowing plain and garden on either side.

How could they remain strangers after that drive? The thing was impossible. Mr. Courteney, with some thaw of his ordinary freezing dignity, thanked Carr again as he alighted, and added, —

"I make it a rule to call on no one, and my

family enters into no society; but you have laid us under an obligation, sir; and if you like to come and see us, you will be welcomed by these ladies, and you must take the consequences which forming any new acquaintance entails. If you find us insupportably dull, or a grade below the society you are accustomed to" (the sick gentleman smiled in a grim, disagreeable way), "remember I have given you no encouragement. The consequences be on your own head!"

CHAPTER VIII.

An English tea-table is, perhaps, never so much appreciated by a man as in a foreign country. It is an institution so essentially national — taken in its integrity, with hissing urn or kettle, and tea that has really seen China — that the "cup which cheers but not inebriates" brings a glow of honest enthusiasm to the British traveller, who meets it after a long abstinence from all such beverage.

An evening or two after his memorable *ruse* (which we must all regret to find had answered so well), Laurence was seated at such a table, over which Mrs. Courteney presided. The appointments of the table were thoroughly English, and there was such a pervading air of comfort, without extravagance, in all the arrangements of the room, that Carr felt it harmonised well with its inmates, no less than with his own contentment, as he sat there. He compared that room, in his own mind, with the threadbare stateliness and discomfort of the marchesa's *salon*, and the miserable napkin, with its coffee-pot and cup, he had seen one morning, when admitted to her at an earlier hour than usual. Perhaps English respectability had never worn so captivating an aspect to him before.

In an arm-chair near the wood fire, which burnt cheerfully on great brass dogs upon the hearthstone, sat Mr. Courteney, engaged in grave discussion with the professor. He was evidently a man of no mean literary attainments; spoke little, but occasionally brought his learning well to bear upon the questions under consideration; and though he carried no snuff-box himself, never refused a pinch from the professor's. The latter regarded him, in consequence, as the most enlightened Englishman he had met. With him he could argue, and quote, and contradict himself — as all lovers of argument do — night after night, to his heart's content, and at perfect ease, over that comfortable fire. The two men suited each other. The Italian's expansive temperament fitted into the dry receptive character of the Englishman; and Mrs. Courteney, who so seldom saw her husband take an interest in conversation, encouraged Garofalo's evening visits, assuring him that they were an act of charity to the sick man. Thus they had come at last to be almost a matter of course.

Upon this occasion his younger companion, Guido Lamberti, had accompanied the professor. His appearance there, as I have already said, was now much less frequent than it had been; and unless he talked upon other occasions more than he did this evening, he could hardly be considered to add much to the hilarity of the party. A finer, but gloomier figure, as he stands there in the shadow of the far end of the room, near the piano, his arms

folded, his eyes fixed intently on that shining tea-table, it would be difficult to see. At the piano is seated Sara Gisborne, her fingers wandering vaguely over the keys, with fragments of some well-known air now and then, like the confused images in a dream. She is not actually playing or singing either, though occasionally a few low contralto notes may be heard: I rather think she is waiting to be asked. But if she is waiting for Count Lamberti, she may sit there for ever, like another Saint Cecilia! Wood and stone are not less conscious than he of the dark-veiled lids and faint-flushed cheek, the quivering lip, and heaving bosom, so close beside him. And yet she looks positively handsome by candle-light in her white dress, nor wholly unlike one of those figures of sensual Creole grace which Vidal loves to paint.

Mrs. Courteney's delicately beautiful profile, with a black lace handkerchief tied loosely under her chin, is bent over her tea-table. She is listening to Carr as he sits opposite, discoursing about art, while her daughter occupies a low stool at her feet. The rays of the lamp fall on Geraldine Courteney's fair head, as her fingers ply rapidly at the long brown straws she is plaiting. Occasionally she looks up with a laugh or a radiant look of intelligence, but her observations and replies do not generally interrupt the task she has in hand. Weave away, young girl, with bright and hopeful spirit, while thou canst! That other weaver Fate has hours in

store for thee not far distant, when thou shalt look back wistfully to this tranquil past!

"Are you in any profession, Mr. Carr?"

"Unfortunately not."

"Why are you not an artist, as you seem so fond of painting?"

"Between the amateur and the artist there is a great gulf fixed, which should never be crossed rashly. Perhaps I haven't sufficient talent, and certainly not sufficient energy, to give myself up to hard study; and without it no man can really be an *artist* — though, like the first cousin to Lady Jones, it may be inscribed on his tomb, that he 'painted in water-colours and of such are the Kingdom of Heaven.'"

Miss Courteney laughed, and then said quickly: "Well, if I were you, I would sooner plead the want of talent than the want of energy. The one you can't help, and the other you can, Mr. Carr."

"True," replied Carr (not without some slight prickings of conscience). "True; but there is such a thing as misdirected energy, ending where it began, in self-delusions! There is nothing more melancholy than a man in pursuit of something which he can never attain."

"Yes. Do you know I think there is: — a man in pursuit of nothing. I should so like to do *something* if I were a man. I beg your pardon: I hope I'm not rude; but I daresay I talk a great deal of

nonsense; only you said '*unfortunately*' you were in no profession."

"And I repeat it, Miss Courteney; but, somehow or other, circumstances have been adverse to it. One day, however, I shall have plenty to do as an English country gentleman, and till then —"

"An English country gentleman! Do describe the life to me! Hunting the fox, and shooting birds, dressed in leather gaiters, and —"

"Birds dressed in leather gaiters?" laughed Carr.

"Oh! you know what I mean — the *men* in leather gaiters, as you see in old engravings. And you always live in a fog, don't you?"

Again Carr laughed. "From whom are your ideas of England imbibed? From Mrs. Courteney?"

"No," glancing up at her mother. "Mamma never will talk about England to me; so all my ideas are taken from *Corinne*, and other books I have read; and I am so much obliged to any one who will tell me about the dear old country which I have a strong affection for, though I have never seen. How I *should* like to go there!"

A shade passed over her mother's face.

"Are you not contented where you are, Gilda?"

"Why, darling mother, of course! You know how fond I am of Italy, and that no other country can be the *same* as this to me, who have grown up under its clear blue sky! But that doesn't prevent my having a great curiosity and desire to visit our own land, of which I have read so much."

"Have you ever travelled in any other countries? Do you know Germany?" asked Carr, curious to know as much as possible of her past life.

"Yes. I am afraid I don't appreciate Germany as I ought. To begin with, of course I'm too Italian to like Austrians. The very sight of a white coat makes me cross. And, besides, all Germans seem to me so cold and phlegmatic."

"I see you are as prejudiced as Mary Ashburton in *Hyperion;* and I feel inclined, like Flemming, to say that it is because you do not know them — the Germans I mean."

"If anything could make me like them, it would be *Hyperion*, which throws such a veil of poetry over Germany and everything belonging to it. What a charming book that is! I like it better even than Longfellow's poetry. But will you tell me, Mr. Carr, if you can, what I never yet have been able to get any one to explain to me — *why* it is called *Hyperion?*"

"Well, let me see. Something to do with heaven and earth. I have a sort of confused idea, which is difficult to put into words. But, on the whole, I am inclined to think Longfellow was influenced in his choice of a name by the example of Richter, with whose writings he was evidently imbued at the time, and whose *Titan* bears as much relation to its name as *Hyperion* does."

"That doesn't quite satisfy me," said Gilda, shaking her head.

"It is the best reason I have to give. But you know it is a fashion in the present day for the titles of books to afford you little or no clue to the contents. The honest old *Travels in the East*, or *Travels in Spain*, have given place to *Eöthens* and *Gaspachos*, and heaven knows what other outlandish names, which convey no idea whatever to an unlettered Englishman in search of information. Then, as to the 'Pencillings,' and 'Pen-and-Ink-ings,' and the 'Rambles' and 'Scrambles' —"

"Let me stop you in time, Mr. Carr," cried Gilda. "You don't know that papa wrote a book called *Cities of Sicily?* In case you should be going to abuse *that* sort of title, it is as well to let you know. But the book is not misnamed: it *does* describe these cities, and nothing else.

"I never met with it. Was it published with Mr. Courteney's name?"

"No — oh! no," interrupted Mrs. Courteney, hurriedly. "It was written many years ago — when you must have been a boy — and it appeared — anonymously." Apparently some painful recollections were associated with the subject, for with the manner of one who would abruptly alter or cut short the channel of conversation, she turned towards the piano, and said, "My dear Sara, be kind enough to play us something."

"What shall it be, ma'am?"

The young woman looked up from the roll of music she was, to all appearance, listlessly turning

over, — though not a word at the farther end of the room had escaped her — and fixed her large eyes on Mrs. Courteney.

"Anything. That sweet, plaintive air I am so fond of. I forget the name of it."

"It is called 'Remorse,'" replied Sara, in her peculiarly low, distinct voice.

As Mrs. Courteney bent forwards to fill the tea-cups before her, Carr was surprised to observe how her hand trembled.

The music was well named. It was one of those subtle compositions in which the mournful theme which pervaded it gained power and intensity as it stole along, from a felicitous progression of harmonies — the bone and muscle, as it were, whereon the melody was built: and the ear probed and dissected it, and returned again untired, with fresh wonder and delight, though, it may be, not unmixed with sadness to sensitive natures.

"Confess, now," said Carr, turning to Gilda, "that could only be a German composition — so admirably thought out — so full and satisfactory. Your Italians never write like that. How capitally Miss Gisborne plays!"

"She does; but the piece makes me sad. It is like the cry of a soul — despairing and almost without hope — that minor ending."

"*Repentance* would end in a major — that is the distinction, I suppose," said Carr.

But further discussion was stopped, for the fair

musician had already finished an improvised prelude to one of Gordigiani's most spirited songs, and now burst forth, in a rich contralto, with the impassioned words, —

"M' è stato detto che tu vuoi partire;
Per quanto posso, tu non devi andare."

It was difficult to believe that the singer was not an Italian, so pure was the enunciation, so spontaneous the rapid utterance of that melodious Tuscan. The energy with which the girl sang it showed that she was either a consummate artist, capable of throwing herself into any part, or that the general sentiment of these words found an echo in the secret chambers of her own heart. Fierce and tender by turns; hoarse with tremulous passion in the words —

"Dammi la mano, oppur prendi un coltello;"

the flood-gates of her voice burst forth with thrilling effect when she added —

". . . . ma non m'abbandonare!"

The singer's countenance was lit up with that strong flame of excitement, or "inspiration," as it has become a fashion to call it, which communicates itself, in greater or less degree, to every listener. At the close of the song, there was general applause from the small audience, led by the professor and Guido, in right of their nationality.

"Brava, signorina!" said the latter. "Such singing as yours is enough to rouse the hearts of a

people to do great things. You would lead an army to battle with an 'Inno di Guerra' better than some generals I could name."

Sara's cheek glowed faintly, and a smile hovered over her lips, as she ran her fingers lightly down the keys.

"No German could have written *that* song, Mr. Carr," said Miss Courteney, smiling. "Confess, now," she added, imitating his own phrase, "that could only be an Italian composition!"

Laurence shrugged his shoulders. "It is the 'rendering,' as newspapers call it, which makes the song. That young lady is uncommonly clever." Then leaning over towards Mrs. Courteney, he continued, in a lower tone, while Sara Gisborne kept up an under-current of accompaniment at the piano, "Is she purely English? Has she no Italian blood in her veins?"

"None, I believe."

"What is her history? Where has she been educated?"

Carr was not accustomed to exercise much restraint upon his curiosity, and sometimes asked rather inconvenient questions out of the fulness of his heart. Mrs. Courteney paused ere she replied, and then did so with some hesitation.

"As to her education, I really do not know much. Her mother was a French Creole, I believe, and Sara was born in the West Indies. So much I have learnt from her. We met her first in Florence,

last year, when she was in a very desolate position, poor girl. An English lady with whom she had been living, and who, it was thought, had adopted her, died, leaving Sara perfectly destitute; and the lady's relations would do nothing for her. She was going out as a governess, or lady's maid, when Courteney heard of her case through our doctor, and thought she might be a useful companion to Gilda, who has seldom had any of her own age. I found her very clever: she taught my daughter a great deal she never knew before, and was contented to accept our secluded life for the sake of a home and protection; so she has remained with us ever since. I mention all this, Mr. Carr, because she is rather a peculiar young person, and her manners are, perhaps, not exactly such as you are accustomed to; but you must be lenient to them. She has never had a mother's care, and has been thrown about the world, and had a troublous life of it until she came to us. We all form hasty judgments in this world, and without knowing something of her past life, poor Sara must be misunderstood, I know."

"You have given me an interest in Miss Gisborne I confess I did not feel before. She is too clever — apparently too well able to take care of herself, for —"

"No, no — not that," said Mrs. Courteney, shaking her head. "She is impulsive and passionate, and these qualities are not good for self-defence, though they may tend to make a singer. Poor child!"

she added, in a yet lower voice; "I fear she has plenty of trouble in store, but as long as she likes it, she shall remain with us; I will never turn her adrift."

"She has qualities which eminently fit her for the stage, I should think."

"Heaven forbid that she should become an actress! To one of Sara's character it would be a dangerous career."

Miss Gisborne had risen from the piano and approached the tea-table.

"Sara, do sing one of Pergolesi's beautiful old airs," said Miss Courteney, "just as a contrast to that Tuscan canzone, and to show what music Italians can make in another line."

The young lady thus addressed turned without reply, and as she passed where Count Guido stood, said, with rather a sarcastic smile —

"You have no taste for church music, I believe?"

"Pardon me," he replied. "For real church music I have the greatest admiration; for the opera pot-pouris they play in our churches, the profoundest disgust and contempt."

"They do not always play that sort of music," said Miss Courteney, quietly. "At the vesper service at San Martino there is sometimes very touching and beautiful music. One evening, the effect it produced on me I shall never forget."

"Nor I," said Carr, but in so low a voice that

no one but Miss Courteney could have heard him; and she looked up simply into his face, as not understanding his words. Guido continued:

"You are more fortunate than I am, signorina. The last time I took my mother to high mass, we were invited to pray to a chorus in *Robert le Diable*, and we came away to the galop in *Gustave*. They treat us like children; our ears must be tickled; and the fine services of Palestrina, Simonelli, and other of the old masters, are thrown aside as cumbersome and dull, in order to pander to the vulgar taste of our priests."

"*Ut populus sic sacerdos*," muttered Mr. Courteney.

"You have few prejudices in their favour, I know," sneered Sara. "Do you ever confess, signor conte?"

Guido looked at her with some surprise.

"Never."

"It must be a comfortable thing," she said, dropping her voice, "to get rid of one's sins in a lump. They tell me it answers perfectly, and I am half tempted to try."

The young Italian remained grave and silent, as though he heard not; leaning with folded arms against the wall, while Sara seated herself once more at the instrument.

The music of Pergolesi showed the resources of her fine voice more than the little Tuscan air had done: she sang the melody of the grand old master with severe simplicity, and yet — it would have

been difficult to say why — her singing now produced no effect upon her audience. Whether she was indeed incapable of raising herself to the level of such elevated music as this, or that from some accidental circumstance her head was disturbed by other thoughts which jarred with the tender solemnity of the words she had to utter, certain it is that the performance seemed cold and lifeless. The professor, it is true, murmured an appropriate quotation at the fire-place about the

"Più dolce canzone e più profonda,"

but no electric fluid of sympathy ran round the small audience. As Sara was not pressed to sing again, she rose and went to the farther end of the room, where she sat silent over some embroidery for the remainder of the evening. Guido was gone; and with him her restlessness and irritation seemed also to have departed. The sharp ear and vigilant eye lost nothing at the tea-table, but all outwardly was subdued and tranquil.

Laurence Carr returned home that evening — the first spent in the familiar intercourse of home life in this family — with deeply-heightened interest and admiration. He had enough of the romantic temperament to feel the charm of such a strange unconventional existence as Geraldine Courteney's appeared to be, and to contrast it favourably with the turmoils of a fashionable life. There was a peculiarity in her position which fascinated his imagination. She had seen nothing of the world, — ac-

cepting the term to mean society, — though the greater part of her short life had been spent in moving from one foreign land to another; and the bond of love uniting father and mother and daughter had grown, no doubt, all the stronger by reason of this isolation from society. The picture of that bright young girl seated at her mother's feet, and looking up, ever and anon, wistfully into the tender, melancholy eyes bent over her, was continually present to the young man's mind as he walked home.

His fastidious taste was not disappointed. No. For the first time in his life an illusion seemed in a fair way of realization. All he saw her do, all he heard her say — and he watched with keen and critical attention — satisfied him. It was a pure crystal nature, through which he saw bright and many-coloured gems below. Would they turn out mere common pebbles? Ay! there was the question. From which the reader will rightly infer that Carr was by no means over head and ears in love as yet. Nevertheless, it was with feelings of considerable annoyance that he read a passage in his mother's letter, which he found lying on his table when he returned home that night. Lady Carrlyon, at the end of four pages of fashionable gossip, in which she detailed all the guests who had been staying at Carrlyon, with the *on-dits* about Lady So-and-so, and Lord So-and-so's infamous will, interlarded with some account of her own schools and of her quarrel with the odious Low-church rector about *that* piece

of land, — at the end of all this, I say, after some comments on Carr's enthusiastic descriptions of Bologna, her ladyship wrote thus: — "You ask me whether I know anything of some people of the name of Courteney. Certainly not. They can't be any relation of Lord D.'s — name not spelt the right way. Probably some vulgar people who have managed to get into society abroad, and whom nobody knows in England. Let me beg you, my dear boy, whatever you do, not to get mixed up with any of our own country people, if you can help it — chance acquaintances, I mean, of course. Foreigners, it doesn't signify, you know — need not know them afterwards. But with English, it is so very awkward having to cut them when you meet again. I remember once about a fever I had, and a woman in the same hotel who came and nursed me — oh! *such* a woman, with the most awful brogue — it was at Cologne — and it was so unpleasant afterwards — of course I *could* not know her in Paris. So, to return to these Courteneys, you will *oblige* me, whatever low company you go into among the Italians, not to mix with any of these vulgar sort of English people."

However involved her ladyship's parts of speech might be, there could be no doubt as to her meaning and its worldly wisdom. Her dutiful son crushed the letter in his hand, with some polite expression which it was just as well that Lady Carrlyon did not overhear.

CHAPTER IX.

A FORTNIGHT elapsed, and Laurence was with his new friends daily. Out of gratitude for her kindly reception of him, he went once or twice to the marchesa's box; but he declared to himself that he was bored by the ceaseless clatter of Italian voices there, and contrasted the evenings spent thus most unfavourably with those passed at the Casa Lamberti. He had not actually a general invitation to the latter, but under some pretext or other contrived to call there every afternoon, and was often asked to stay and join the family tea-table. He lent Miss Courteney drawings, and brought her books of all kinds. He gave her lessons of an evening, moreover, on the sketches or copies that had been made during the day. The young girl entered enthusiastically into this new pursuit, and enjoyed these evening lessons apparently as much as he did. She always greeted his arrival with a bright smile. He was the first young Englishman she had known, and she found him so pleasant and amusing! He brought a fund of new life from the outer world into that little circle. Carr watched her and Guido very narrowly, but there was nothing to lead him to suppose that the Italian was more than a very intimate

amico di casa, to use the phrase he heard so frequently. The girl had evidently a great deference for his opinion: broke off in the middle of what she was saying to listen to him if he spoke, and never attempted to contradict him as she did Carr. But Guido was generally silent: sometimes even abstracted, and this seemed to be growing on him; while, on the other hand, Carr was always agreeable, and with him Miss Courteney laughed and talked unrestrainedly. Carr was very anxious that his rank and fortune should not transpire. He had seen too much of the world, not to be aware that all his agreeability and accomplishment were as a feather to a ton when weighed with those substantial advantages in society's scale. Though he did not think the Courteneys would be much influenced thus, he was determined to push his way on to their intimacy as an unknown man — much as the soldier, having fought his own way to the breach, deprecates the friendly hand that would help him over. His instructions to Giuseppe were rigorous — not to mention his master's family and position to any of the servants at the Casa Lamberti. Guido and Garofalo only knew him as "Signor Carr." I strongly suspect, however, that Miss Gisborne, at a very early period, found ways and means to ascertain the young Englishman's rank and prospects.

And what of Mr. Courteney? How did he regard Laurence? It was difficult to say. That he sanctioned his constant visits there could be no

doubt: but whether from policy, inclination, or indifference, the closest observer — that same mythical character I have already cited — could not have told. A man of few words, self-contained in his sorrows or his aversions, apparently never expansive with either wife or child; wrapping the untold secrets of his heart in a frigid case of polite studies, classical research, Etruscan antiquarianism, and so forth, he crawled from the fireside to the garden, with his volume of Pliny or Tacitus, and seemed to set his books and his infirmities as a fence round him from too close contact with the outer world. He seldom joined in general conversation: a word or two aptly dropped sometimes illuminated a whole field of discussion, and a dry, thin smile flitted across those bloodless features now and then. If Carr applied to him for any information, he gave it with lucidity and precision; and, once or twice, the young man had more lengthened arguments with him on abstract subjects; but, generally speaking, the only person he could be said to converse with was the professor.

Miss Gisborne's strangely capricious humours puzzled Carr a good deal. Towards himself her manner had latterly undergone a marked change. The cat-like suspicion with which she had at first regarded him had departed. She even allowed him to discover, when chance threw them immediately together, that she could talk on most subjects with point and facility. But she still habitually remained

silent, unless when Guido Lamberti was present. She then, more than once, startled Carr by the vehemence with which she threw herself into some discussion that was going forward, terminating in glimpses of almost ungovernable ill-humour. At first sight, it appeared as if she purposely displayed her worst side whenever she was in the Italian's company; but one versed in human nature might have otherwise interpreted the nervous irritability, the impetuous utterance, the restless glances, fierce, or bold, or tearful, which the girl directed towards Lamberti.

But a change had been coming over him, too, these last few days: a slight one, perhaps, but still very perceptible to the person most concerned. Each evening that he had passed latterly with the Courteneys he had seated himself by Sara, turning his face resolutely away from the group at the drawing-table. He could not bear to look at them, and he had not the courage to remain away altogether. Yet what right had he to dispute that place beside her? None. But though he held himself aloof, though he scarcely addressed her in the course of the evening, he could listen to her merry laugh, and hear her naïve remarks, even while appearing to talk to the girl beside him. The god who is said to be blind may have deceived for awhile even so keen-sighted a victim as Sara Gisborne — who knows? Carr, who was too much engrossed with his own affairs to watch the barometer of the Creole's temper very

attentively, observed with surprise her softened voice and subdued manner one evening.

"That girl is the queerest compound I ever met!" he mentally ejaculated.

There was a certain villa of Prince Ortolani's near Bologna, to which the public was not admitted, and of which, in consequence, rumour gave the most fabulous account. Babylon and Armida did their usual good service, of course, in the descriptions of its wonders. Carr had not much curiosity himself on the subject, but it was an object for a pleasant drive with the Courteneys, and he obtained a card of admission without difficulty, through the marchesa. It happened that Razzi was present when Madame Onofrio gave him the ticket of admission, which was good for one day only in the week.

"Can you not introduce me to these country-people of yours, Signor Carr?" asked the Italian, drawing him aside.

"Impossible, my dear count. I've had all the trouble in the world to know them myself. The old gentleman is a monomaniac on the subject of society."

"But the dark signorina, eh? You English allow your young ladies a freedom we don't understand here. Can't you introduce me to *her*?"

Carr laughed, and assured him it was as much as his place was worth to present a stranger to any member of the Courteney household: and there the matter dropped.

The day specified on the card was cold, but fine, and soon after one Carr drove up to the Casa Lamberti. He was disappointed beyond measure to find that Miss Courteney was not going. She had a slight cold, her mother said, caught while sitting out to sketch the day before; "and as she is not very strong," added Mrs. Courteney, "we are obliged to be careful. Walking about on marble floors, and standing in damp gardens, at this time of year, is not very prudent for any one, I believe; but Courteney seems inclined to go, so we will not put it off on Gilda's account."

There was nothing to be said. *He* could not put off the expedition if they chose to go; but he was annoyed, and the prospect of a long afternoon without his one attraction looked dismal.

Miss Gisborne sat beside him in the carriage, and opposite was Mr. Courteney. Carr had never talked so much with that gentleman before, and though he did not feel that he knew him any better, or liked him any more at the end of that long drive, he could not but own that it was rare to find a man whose conversation betrayed a deeper knowledge of men, and who managed to say so much in so few words. It was curious, however, to observe how he glanced aside from any subject which should lead him to speak of England. The East and West Indies, the prairies of North and South America, the most remote parts of Europe, he seemed familiar with them all; but one might almost imagine that

he had never seen the white cliffs of his native land. On the other hand, he drew a great deal from Laurence, who, except on the subject of his family and social prospects, spoke unreservedly enough: and without any "pumping" Mr. Courteney found the expression of the young man's principles and opinions flow pretty freely. This was probably what he wanted; and he exerted himself to talk — knowing that in no part of the human frame is there more sympathy than in the tongue.

The villa, when they reached it, proved to be very much what Mr. Courteney had predicted — a monument of costly bad taste. It was built in the disastrous style of the last century: broken pediments, garlanded with flowers, and niches filled by pupils of Bernini with statues in a whirlwind of stone drapery. The gardens had exhausted the ingenuity of successive princes to devise new monstrosities: Chinese pagodas and Swiss châlets; artificial cascades over painted rocks ("a spot worthy of Salvator Rosa," as the guide said), and imitation trees squirting water over the unsuspecting visitor; gigantic piles of shell and concrete, with a stuffed tiger couchant in the midst. These and similar delights were characteristic of the depraved taste now so common, alas! among a people once conspicuous for their refinement.

Mr. Courteney and his wife remained in the *orangerie*, while Sara and Laurence set out to walk round the extensive gardens. Mr. Courteney took

a volume out of his pocket and began reading. Presently he laid it down, and, turning to his wife, said —

"Lamberti comes to us much less than he did."

"Yes," replied Mrs. Courteney. "I can't help thinking his mother objects to his being so much with us."

"The counter-attraction is not as strong, then, as you once thought it might be?" said the invalid, with a somewhat sarcastic smile.

"No: I suppose not; and perhaps, Henry, it is better so. One gets to see these things differently."

"Your opinions have undergone a marvellously rapid change. It is not so very long since you told me you would not desire a better husband for Gilda."

"Nor could I. I have a real love and respect for him, and think his is a rare character; but unless the child cared very deeply for him, I doubt whether she would be happy. It would be a most unquiet existence. She would be persecuted by the old lady to become a Catholic, and Guido's strong political feelings are sure to lead him into troubled waters. I had rather our darling's future were a peaceful one, if possible."

"Peace cometh not from without," muttered the sick man. . . . . "But all this you knew months ago. I repeat, your opinions have changed very rapidly."

"Gilda has seen nothing of the world," said Mrs.

Courteney, evasively. "Latterly I have thought that perhaps she would be happier married to an Englishman, and leading a quiet English life."

There was a twinkle in Mr. Courteney's eye as he said —

"I thought so. You have looked, then, at the probable consequence of letting this man into the house? He isn't likely to fall very desperately in love. It is a yearly epidemic with that kind of man: but supposing she burns her fingers?"

"I don't think there's much danger at present. He is very agreeable, and unlike the few people she has ever had an opportunity of meeting; and I candidly confess that I shall be very glad if she *does* like him, and he likes her; but she is so simple and child-like still, that I really think no idea of *love* has yet crossed her mind."

Mr. Courteney raised his eyebrows for all reply.

He took the *Tacitus* from his pocket, and read on for the next hour without another word.

"On this spot," said the *custode* to Carr, as they reached a dark corner near a fish-pond, "the late prince's brother committed suicide. He was in love, and rejected by the lady's family, so he blew out his brains. *Povero Principe!*"

"It seems to be regarded as an interesting feature in the place," said Carr. "Look at this tablet with an inflated tribute to the virtues of the deceased. 'Al egregio ed eccellente Principe!' Well! we may find sermons in stones here, if not good in

everything. To laud a man who has been guilty of that final act of moral cowardice —"

"Poor wretch!" murmured Sara, with a shudder. "He must have suffered much; he must have been hopeless; but he was not a *man*, or he would have overcome every obstacle. Will is fate; don't you believe that, Mr. Carr?"

"Have you found it so?" he asked quietly, in reply.

"I am a woman. We come under stronger influences than our own, which paralyze us at times."

"Do you mean seriously to say you think that a man endowed with powerful will can do what he pleases?"

"It depends on *what* it is he pleases, and the means he has. Power, money, influence — these a strong will may always gain; love, too, in nine cases out of ten. It will draw towards itself, with mesmeric power, even hearts that have succumbed already to some foolish passion. Yes, yes!" she added rapidly, "all this a strong will can accomplish!"

A turn in the shrubbery brought them across a gentleman, who smiled and took off his hat to Carr, and stared fixedly at his companion.

"Who is that?" asked Sara, abruptly.

"Count Giulio Razzi. Why do you ask?"

"Because I see him constantly when we are out. Is he a Bolognese?"

"I believe so — a very old family, but poor, like most of them."

"Ah!"

"None of the young men here seem to do anything to try and gain an honest livelihood: they, at least, have no strong will! and how they marry and support families I can't imagine, while their coffers remain empty —"

"As empty as their heads. But they look to their wives to supply the former; the *latter* even a dowry cannot do. So this count, then, has nothing but his ancient title to recommend him! What is the marketable value of that, do you think?"

"I cannot say," answered Carr, in the same tone of sarcasm, but the hidden meaning of his words was not lost upon his listener. "The object of the purchaser, the amount of 'alarming sacrifice' she was willing to make, would probably determine the real value of the possession to her. But I should recommend no one to effect the purchase, without duly considering how the article is likely to wear."

Sara seemed hardly to hear him; she was lost in a train of thought not the most agreeable, to judge by her face; and soon after broke into another subject in her usual abrupt way.

An hour afterwards they were standing in one of the polished marble saloons of the villa, which they had left until the last, and Mr. and Mrs. Courteney were now with them. The walls were lined with statuary; mostly rubbish, but amongst which Mr. Courteney's critical eye detected a remark-

ably beautiful female bust, under which was written "Messalina."

"Probably so christened," said Mr. Courteney, "on account of the strong animal character of the whole head, admirably modelled as it is. Evidently a bust from life, whoever the original was. Look at the phrenological development! It is curious how the ancients, while ignorant of the science, illustrated it perfectly, not only in their careful reproduction of living types in marble, but in their conceptions of their deities, each the personification of some one vice or virtue."

"But phrenologists seem to me mistaken very often," said Carr; "just because nobody living *is* the personification of any one thing, but a jumble of contradictory ones. As to this Roman empress, I never can help pitying her. She lived too long ago to have her character 'rehabilitated,' as is the fashion in the present day, with estimable characters like Richard the Third; or she might have been proved to be a model of domestic virtue, instead of remaining a peg to hang infamy upon through all time!"

"All vice may be said to be disease, and such a course as this woman's was so, no doubt; and in that case more deserving philosophic comparison than reprehension," said Mr. Courteney, sententiously.

"No, no," murmured his wife, in a low voice; "we may all say our sins are diseases we inherit.

We must not attempt to cast away the responsibility of them thus. No!" she added, with a deep sigh, "we were born with our eyes open, knowing the evil and the good!"

"And prone to follow the former, I believe, ma'am," said Sara, smiling. "I daresay, after all, Messalina wasn't worse than half the women who pass for paragons of virtue. As to the men, I suppose there's a separate code of morals for them in the kingdom of Heaven, as there is here. For women, all the law and the prophets is contained in one commandment — '*Thou shalt not be found out.*'"

Mrs. Courteney looked pained, as she naturally might, at hearing the girl's strange speech; but Mr. Courteney flushed in a manner very unusual with him, and his voice had an angry, tremulous sharpness when he spoke, unlike its usually cold, measured cadence.

"Let me recommend you, young lady, as you value your *advancement* in life, to be careful not to make too free a display of your copious information, and to be circumspect in the choice of subjects on which to exercise your wit."

A look shot from the girl's eyes which Carr did not easily forget, but she smiled and turned away; and the sick man, as though ashamed to have been surprised out of his ordinary icy self, never uttered again till they reached home.

CHAPTER X.

About a week later, Mr. Courteney had some conversation with his wife, which we need not detail here, as the results of it will be tolerably apparent presently. Suffice it to say that he had been ill for some days.

With what eyes the different inmates of the Casa Lamberti beheld the growing intimacy with the young Englishman with the Courteney family, we shall also soon see.

"Guido scarcely ever comes near us now," said Mrs. Courteney to her daughter, as they sat at work together in the mother's room.

"Do you know, mother, I fancy somehow that he — he doesn't like Mr. Carr. It's very odd, for I think Mr. Carr so pleasant, and he's so very kind to me. We shall be dreadfully sorry when he goes away, sha'n't we? But, if you observe, Guido scarcely speaks to him. It makes me quite uncomfortable to see them together!"

"Yes, and I have also observed how amiably Mr. Carr has once or twice tried to draw Guido into conversation, but in vain."

The mother watched her daughter's face attentively all this time.

"We shall probably see him again at Florence or Pisa. He will, I dare say, follow us."

"Follow us? What do you mean? We are not going to leave Bologna, mother?"

"Your father seems to think this place too cold. He is not sure either that it agrees with you. He talks of moving somewhere."

The girl had dropped her work, and sat gazing with sad eyes before her.

"And Guido?"

"Well, my daughter, what of him?

There was a long pause.

"Will he not follow us, too?"

"Nay, how can you expect it? He is working hard here; and though we are living in the same house, he can scarcely find time even to pay us a visit now once or twice a week."

Gilda sighed.

"Why do you sigh, dear? Shall you be so very sorry to leave this?"

"I shall never like any place so well. Dear old house! I shall never know how happy I have been here until it is all past!"

Her mother looked puzzled; and it was now her turn to sigh.

"My darling mustn't get sentimental. We women must learn to know our own hearts early — what it is we *do* most value. It comes too late, by-and-by! Too late, my darling; and regrets then are vain!"

Her lips trembled as she kissed her daughter's forehead, and rising, passed into the adjoining room, where her husband lay.

An hour afterwards, Carr called. He found the two girls in the drawing-room, and soon perceived that there was a shadow over the brow of both. Gilda had just communicated to Sara the probability of their leaving Bologna. Unless some decisive measures were taken, this would be destructive to all that young lady's views. She said nothing, but sat coiled up on the sofa, with eyes fixed on the pages of *Niccolo de' Lapi* before her, though she read not a word therein, and never altered her position when Carr entered. Gilda's depression showed itself, of course, in a very different form. She smiled as she held out her hand, and talked very much as usual. Carr could do no more than silently observe the change in her usually buoyant spirits, and wonder at the cause.

I should have described before the distribution of the Courteneys' apartments, and it is necessary I should do so here, to make what followed on this and subsequent occasions clear to the reader. The *salotto* in which the family generally sat, and where Carr now found the two girls, communicated with Mrs. Courteney's room, by a door which generally stood open: and looking through this door, you saw another opposite to it, which was always shut. This led to Mr. Courteney's room, which was a *cul-de-sac*. The ante-room on the other side of the *salotto* con-

ducted to the *sala di pranzo*, to the large bed-room conjointly occupied by the two girls, and to the servants' apartments. From this ante-room also led the door which I have elsewhere mentioned as connecting the portion of the palace let to the Courteneys with the wing in which Guido and his mother lived.

"I have brought you a tolerable copy I have had done, by a poor artist here, of my favourite little Magdalene in the gallery, by Timoteo delle Vite. You said you did not remember it?"

"No; and I am afraid my education is not sufficiently advanced yet to care for those hard early pictures as I ought. You always tell me I like the wrong things," she added, with a smile.

"When are we to go to the gallery, that your education may be continued? I have not had the pleasure of taking you there yet."

"It must be some day soon." She felt reluctant to talk about their departure: and it was as much to change the subject as anything, that she added — "I don't think you have ever seen a picture in my mother's room? We call it her Madonna. My father picked it up many years ago, and no one has ever decided who it is by. I think it more lovely than any Raphael I ever saw; but very likely old associations have something to do with it. Whenever my mother is nervous, or out of spirits, I have seen the consolation this picture has been to her. She often sits for hours at a time looking at it."

She led the way into the adjoining room as she spoke, and drew the curtain of a small picture which stood in the corner, over a writing-table. The subject was that commonest of all with the old Italians — a Virgin and Child. It would seem hardly possible that this oft-repeated group can be otherwise than conventional. Yet the unknown painter had thrown an expression into those two heads which stamped the picture as original. The solemn love of the mother, impressed with the awful privilege of that maternity, yet watching with tender human gaze the divine child upon her knee, and clasping with her woman's hand that holy charge which angels guarded — the far-seeing eyes of the infant, looking through you, and beyond you, with pitying intensity, whereby the Divinity was manifested more nobly than by the glory round his head — these things indicated no ordinary painter, but one deeply imbued with the spirit of what he painted, and to whom his work had been a labour of pious love. Whatever its school, whatever its technical defects, it was a picture which could not but affect the beholder who was capable of feeling its pure devotional spirit. Beneath it was written, on a slip of paper, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

"It is a very remarkable picture," exclaimed Carr, after a pause; "and those words are a just commentary on the wonderful expression of the

child-Christ's face. All the sermons in the world may be condensed in that one text."

"You can understand what this picture is to my mother, then — this thought so full of love and compassion before her eyes, whenever she is suffering."

"The painter, whoever he was, was hardly a Romanist in one sense. The majesty is all in the child: the mother is only a pure and tender woman — such as *we* picture Mary of Galilee — not an object of worship, as Rome makes her."

He stood before it some minutes more, and then, as he was turning away, his eye fell on an old-fashioned brass-bound desk which stood on the table beneath. There was one noticeable thing about this object, which arrested Laurence Carr's attention. Upon the lid was an engraved crest; and below it, pains had evidently been taken to obliterate some name or motto which had once stood there. Whatever it was, it had been scratched finely over, and was now illegible. The crest represented a man with a key in his hand and a rope round his neck. Though apparently some effort had been made to erase this also, the engraving was too teep, and the design was still clearly definable.

"Is this strange device the Courteney crest?" asked Carr.

"We have no crest. My father will not carry armorial bearings. I don't know whose this is,

or whom the box originally belonged to. My mother —"

The door leading to Mr. Courteney's room opened.

"What are you doing there, my child?"

It was Mrs. Courteney's voice, and she crossed the room with a hasty step. She looked discomposed.

"I brought Mr. Carr to look at your Madonna, mother; and he was asking me the meaning of the crest on this box, and whom it belonged to."

The trouble in the elder lady's face was her only reply. She moved away into the *salotto*, and sat down at the farther end. The shades of twilight were fast gathering; and Carr could scarcely define more than her figure, as she sat with hands clasped upon her knees and her head bent over them. Gilda was so accustomed to see her mother look anxious and harassed when she left Mr. Courteney's room, that she paid but little attention to these facts. Her mother's life was one of constant watching, patience, and disappointment. Mrs. Courteney's discomposure, however, was new to Carr, and struck him; but his curiosity was piqued, and he could not help returning to the subject which had originally roused it.

"I am curious in crests," he said, carelessly. "It seems to me that I have seen this, but cannot remember whether it is English or foreign. Do

you happen to know the name of the family that bears it?"

There was a pause. And then her voice came low and interrupted, like wind rustling through thin autumn leaves. "The family is called Caliston."

"Ah! I know all about it now — if my memory serves me right, at least. An ancestor was one of the condemned citizens of Calais, whose lives Philippa's intercession saved, when they came with ropes round their necks, bearing the keys of their city to Edward. This ancestor, I fancy, came over to England, and got called *Calaistown* — a nick-name, at first — which was corrupted into *Caliston*, and seriously adopted in lieu of his French name, which English lips couldn't pronounce. If I remember right, there was a title — Grandon, I think, in the family — but if so, — it is extinct. Titles die out so in England!"

Mrs. Courteney neither spoke nor moved. Her daughter said, musingly, "That is a curious story: I wonder I never heard it before. The origin of crests and names would make an interesting book, I should think. What do you suppose the origin of *Courteney* was?"

"Taking the nick-name theory," laughed Carr, "we may suppose that some ancestor of yours was conspicuous for the shortness of his nose; and those ill-mannered Normans, who were always so personal in their pleasantry, dubbed him *Courte-Nez*."

"Well, we have got over the insult in the lapse

of time," replied Gilda, smiling; "and our noses have regained a moderate length. I am glad the insult was not perpetuated in a crest."

"The motto of that Caliston crest, *In fœminâ salus*, is a monument to Queen Philippa, and a noble compliment to your sex, take it which way you will. '*Safety in a woman.*' Ladies of the house of Caliston may well be proud of that. Are you connected in any way?"

Mrs. Courteney rose, but her voice shook so much that the words she uttered were scarcely distinguishable. "She knows nothing of the family you speak of. They and we are strangers."

"Ah! I thought so," said Carr, quietly; "from the fact of the name being erased from the box — probably at the time it was bought at some sale — but —"

"Mother! Dear mother! you are ill," and Gilda ran towards Mrs. Courteney, who was pressing one hand convulsively to her heart, while she leant on the sofa with the other. "This is one of your old attacks from over-excitement and fatigue. Come and lie down, and don't talk any more." She drew her away, supporting her with her twining arms, and the bedroom door closed behind them.

Carr felt, and he well might, rather uncomfortable. He reproached himself — as is always the case, when too late — for his "cursed curiosity." His questions had awakened in some way a chain of painful memories in the poor lady's mind; there

could be no doubt about it. A mystery connected with that name — possibly an early, an unrequited love, buried and out of sight long ago; bundles of *his* letters, written in the hawthorn days of her girlhood, before she knew the hard, cold man whose bride she afterwards became, the ink now faded, in the secret drawers of that desk — Carr's mind suggested some such possible romance; and from it he was roused by a heavy sigh in the farther corner of the room. He started, having entirely forgotten Miss Gisborne's presence. The room was almost dark, but the light of the fire caught the girl's glittering eyes, sending out lurid flashes now and then from the shadow where she still lay coiled up upon the sofa.

"Mrs. Courteney is very nervous," said the low contralto voice.

"Is she subject to these attacks?"

"You have observed that she is a devoted wife. Whenever Mr. Courteney is worse than usual, the least thing upsets her."

"He must be a bad patient, I should think — enough to make any one ill to be with him. Is he really worse?"

"So much so that he contemplates leaving Bologna, as he thinks the climate does not agree with him."

"Leaving Bologna! And where will they go?"

"*Chi lo sa?* They may travel, perhaps, from place to place."

Carr's heart sank. It would be impossible, without assuming a more decided attitude than he was prepared to do, for him to follow the Courteney wanderings day by day. Had the young lady calculated on the effect her words would produce? She knew, at all events, that nothing was less probable than the probability she suggested. Mr. Courteney's health could ill stand the fatigue of constant travelling.

"How long have they been here?" said Carr, abruptly.

"Seven months. Geraldine and I shall be glad enough to get away: we are tired of this dull, old house."

"You had better only answer for yourself."

"Perhaps she may have changed lately. She used to agree with me in thinking Bologna gloomy — this house especially, after Rome and Naples. Not that she saw any more society there than here, for her life has always been a melancholy one. I shouldn't stand it as well as she does, if I were in her place — the only child of a rich man; but *dependants* must take what they can get, and be thankful. It is hard for Geraldine, at her age, to be shut out from all intercourse with the world, where she would be so much admired; but she bears it like an angel!"

There was an ugly smile on the girl's face, which the darkness happily covered.

"Miss Courteney seems to me to be perfectly

happy," said Carr; "and she is so fond of Italy and Italians that, at least, she has no regrets, I conceive, for the English society from which Mr. Courteney's strange prejudices more especially banish her."

"Notwithstanding her foreign education," replied Sara, quickly, "she is essentially English, as you must see yourself; and would only be happy as the wife of an Englishman, I believe."

"It is getting late," said Carr, in his sudden way. "I am afraid Mrs. Courteney is too unwell to leave her room again, so I will wish you good evening."

He abjured the marchesa's box that evening. Sitting moodily over the fire in his dressing-gown, and puffing away at a regalia, he looked upon himself as one of the most ill-used and suffering of men. It is a hazardous thing to attempt to give a tangible form to the current of any man's unspoken thought, but it ran probably somewhat in this wise —

"If they go away, what am I to do? I am fast falling desperately in love with that girl — they ought to see that. I shall never meet any one again I admire half as much. She realizes my *beau idéal* of what a girl ought to be. Never but once before have I seen anything to be compared with her — that poor curate's daughter at Carrlyon. Ah! that was five years ago. I suppose I've grown more worldly-wise since then; but I have the same

confounded ill-luck. My lady would turn up her nose at these people as much as she did at poor Bessy Hobbs. Well, what then? I'm no longer a child in leading-strings, and I won't marry a London girl — I've always said so. But I should like to see more of these people before I — We have only known each other three weeks! Why the deuce *do* they go away just now? It's very stupid of them. The father I don't much like, but then one doesn't marry the father. The mother — well, I wish my own mother were like her; only that these nervous attacks are a bore. Not that I believe a word of the nervousness. When that horse ran away the other day, she wasn't a bit frightened. No! It is something more than that — something which neither her child nor, perhaps, any one else knows. No matter: there is no mystery about Gilda — *my* Gilda! Hallo! Laurence Carr, you're going ahead. She'd only be happy *as the wife of an Englishman.* Well! At first I thought there was something between her and this fellow Lamberti — that Werther-like air was likely to take a young girl — but I am reassured. I believe he's in love, but he sees it's hopeless. That accounts for his following them about at dusk, like a cat, as I first saw him doing. The idea of that rare jewel being thrown away on a penniless Italian — mewed up in this gloomy old palace — persecuted by the priests and that righteous old woman who lives shut up in a room there! But if she really loved him? Hum!

— I suppose she'd be contented with anything. Do I intend my wife to lead a dissipated London life? No. We shall live at Carrlyon, and receive our friends there, and go up to town sometimes, and sometimes travel and lead a pastoral life in the mountains; and I shall paint at last *that* picture which is to make my reputation; and Gilda — By Jove! my imagination is running away with me. Well! if they only remain here a fortnight longer —"

With this incomplete resolve Carr flung the end of his third cigar into the fire, and went to bed.

CHAPTER XI.

Guido Lamberti was pacing the terrace at the end of his garden early one morning. At this hour he was secure from interruption, and could escape from the narrow confines of his own room to enjoy the liberty of this walk without danger of encountering any of the Courteney family. Up and down, with his law-books under his arm, his brow bent, his eyes fixed moodily on the ground, the young man walked; stopping every now and then to lean upon the terrace wall and look out on the landscape below. The early sunlight flashed on white convent walls and sculptured towers; the keen tramontana wind lifted into tremulous silver the gray-tufted olives, and cut out the blue profile of the Apennines vividly against the sky. Perhaps those well-known objects had never looked more beautiful, and the Italian's senses were never shut to nature; but his thoughts were otherwise engaged.

"Is it wise to maintain this struggle any longer? May not even my resolution be too severely tried? Were it not better to break this chain at once — to go away for a time, seeing that here I am wearing my life out in this miserable fight? I cannot study. I cannot even devote my thoughts to the grave

questions which are arising for Italy. I am growing more hopelessly weak, more absorbed by this one fatal idea, every day! She will marry this Englishman. It is but natural, I suppose, that she should. There is no doubt she likes him: ought that not to be enough for me? *I* can never be anything to her. Years, at least, must elapse before I could hope to offer her anything but an empty name; and *never*, while penniless, will I woo a rich wife. Long before that she will be married. Yes! if I ever indulged in the foolish dream at times that I might awaken in her heart some answer to the growing passion within me, it has been dispelled. She takes a delight in this Englishman's society she never could do in mine. I am dull and taciturn. I cannot compete with this brilliant man of the world; and yet I know I have something within me that he has not — a strength and depth of attachment of which I believe he is incapable. If he were made of other stuff, I think I could better bear to see her become his; — but I mistrust him — this gay, accomplished gentleman. He is vain and frivolous — a spoilt child of fortune — without the solidity of character whereon to build a woman's happiness. Am I jealous and prejudiced? Perhaps so. This daily torture I cannot stand much longer. It is better that I should put an end to it at once!"

He had reached one of the old cypresses at the end of the terrace, where another walk crossed it at right-angles. And here he suddenly came face to

face with Miss Courteney. She started; and the colour fluttered in her cheek.

"Good day, Guido. I did not expect to find any one out here at this hour."

"I am just going in. I will not disturb your meditations."

"I wanted to breathe the fresh air. I felt stifled in my room," she said, without replying to his words; "and I wanted also to see the early sunlight on those hills, which I must soon wish good-by to!" There was a pause.

"Are you really going to leave Bologna? The signora said something of this the other day; but your father paid his rent for three months in advance only a few weeks back."

The young count said this simply, without any false shame in alluding to his position as a landlord; though his pride in other ways, as we have seen, was so sensitive.

"My father has been certainly worse since the extreme cold began, and he thinks that at Pisa, or Leghorn, or even on the Lung' Arno at Florence, he should be warmer. I am so tired of these moves every six or nine months! and I am so sorry to leave Bologna and this dear old house. I shall never like any place as well, Guido. I have been so happy here."

"I am glad of it," he replied, rather coldly. "I hope the memories associated with my old house may not lose their charm for you in after years."

"They never can," she said, eagerly.

"I hope you may continue as happy as you now are. In that case, your impressions will not change."

"Why should you think they could?" she persisted. "Even if I am not — happy?"

He could not give the obvious answer, and so force a confession or denial from her; he felt the danger, and replied vaguely.

"Your ideas of happiness may change. You will probably go forth into the world, and a more animated existence may alone seem worthy of that name. It is possible that if you revisit this dull old house years hence you will wonder that you ever thought it endurable."

She was silent: the tears had gathered in her eyes.

"Do you think," she said, at last, with some touch of resentment in her tone, "that I am so frivolous as to be carried away completely by this 'world' of which you speak, and which it is most improbable I shall ever see?"

"No; and I repeat that if your lot is happy, you will look back with pleasure to these tranquil days, even though you would not willingly return to the monotony of such a life. The universal law of change governs all around. Are we either of us what we were six years ago, when I first knew you? If I meet you six years hence, will you not be very different to what you are now? New friends, new ties, new interests — these effect great changes."

"Do you think that new friends can make me forget old ones?" she said, in a tremulous voice, and with averted face. "O Guido, you are unkind, you are unjust."

"I think not," he replied, with a strong effort at self-command. "I did not say you would *forget*, but things belonging to the past must as surely drop out of your future life as the stars fade out of heaven at morning's approach. You are going out into the broad sunlight. Our paths henceforward diverge widely asunder. Such lives as Garofalo's and mine," he added, hastily — "grim lives of drudgery and routine — can have no longer anything to do in your future sphere. Those lives have crossed yours for an instant; their course will now lead them farther from you each day."

She stood for a long time silent, looking over the terrace wall. Her eyes seemed to watch the cloud-shadows flitting over the distant crests of purple Apennines; but she had a choking at her throat, poor child, which prevented her uttering a word.

Her thoughts, too, refused to shape themselves into any language. Something of what he said was true, indeed. For a great and, as it seemed to her, a sudden change had come over her within the last day or two. She was not the same expansive, sunny-hearted girl she had been a week ago. The last shred of childhood had dropped from her; she had awaked to all the tender consciousness of woman.

Her heart dared not give an account to itself of all the contending emotions that arose there. She knew that she was miserable; and now within these last few minutes doubly so. That was enough, poor child!

"Must you always remain here?" she faltered at last. "Have you no ambition that points beyond Bologna, and the life you are leading? What of your own future?"

"I have hard work for many years before me here, *unless* the crisis we are expecting arrives. When my country requires me I shall be ready: until then, to take care of my old mother, and to work for our daily bread — these are my duties, and my only *prospects*. As to the wild ambition, the extravagant hopes of youth, signorina," he added, bitterly, "I have grown wiser of late. The fulfilment of such dreams is not for me."

"If they are worth keeping, don't cast them aside at once —" but the girl's voice was scarcely audible.

Oh, that he had dared fall at her feet, and, pouring forth all the passionate love at his heart, acknowledge what those hopes, what that ambition, had once been! But he crushed back the rebel thought, as his hand did the yellow vine-leaves above his head; and his words, when he spoke at length, were calm and self-contained.

"The Italians have enough to do to live in the hard, actual present. Hopes which a man's own

brain or right arm can never realize — the things which lie beyond his power to accomplish — he does well to put away, sternly, decisively, at once."

"You say that circumstances change," persisted Gilda gently, "and that we all change with them. May not a time arrive when these hopes of your youth, whatever they be, can be realized? Or is it the change in yourself?" she added, in a still lower voice — "a change which has already begun, and which you feel will increase?"

"Yes, yes," he said, quickly, "I am changed, and I shall no doubt change still more. If we suffered in middle life as we do in youth, there would be no old age. But we grow *harder*. Thank God for that!"

She turned round, and raised her eyes wistfully into his face. There was something that struck her as unnatural in his tone of voice. She sighed heavily.

"I must go in; there is the convent-bell striking eight, and I have not yet heard how my father is this morning."

As she stepped from under the shadow of the cypress into the full sunshine of the terrace, one of the small Swedish gloves she carried dropped from her hand. Had she seen the instantaneous movement with which Guido stooped and thrust it into his breast, how different the whole aftercurrent of those two lives might have been!

But another pair of eyes beheld that small, rapid

action; and a white face grew yet one shade whiter among the oleander-trees yonder. The teeth were set, and a small hand clenched as they approached; and then a shadow stole noiselessly away, crept around a corner of the palace, and disappeared.

They spoke no more to one another. Silently, side by side, they walked until they reached the court-yard, when the young count gravely raised his broad beaver hat, and passed under the narrow doorway that led to his own wing of the palace. The girl, on her side, turned slowly, thoughtfully up the marble steps towards the apartment her family occupied.

CHAPTER XII.

Guido, his head buried in his hands, the door barred against Nanna's importunities that he will break his fast with a *mortadella* — Guido, I say, in that fastness of his, may let his thoughts travel at will from the folios and pencil notes that lie before him. The morning will slip by, as mornings have done with him before, alas! in a tumult of conflicting thought, from which his energy will rise victor, but which leaves traces of that struggle in the trampled and wasted gardens of the heart. At three-and-twenty, his youth is gone. Let it go! The stern, self-contained man may be wrong in his views of life, wrong in the main principle which rules him now, but he has obtained something which middle age — ay, and old age, too (according to the most credited accounts) — do not always possess. He had obtained the mastery over his own passions.

But while he sits alone there with his eyes fixed dreamily on the page before him, Gilda, with an aching heart under her faintly smiling face, passes the morning in the gallery with her mother and Laurence Carr. Little opportunity has she to commune with her own thoughts while Carr is expatiating on the elevated beauty of Francia's "Saint Se-

bastian," or scornfully pointing out the frigid formalism of the Eclectics. Gilda, it is true, finds herself every now and then answering somewhat at random, and is conscious of a vacuum between the observation she has just caught and the last she can remember. How is this? Carr's conversation is always agreeable, and he is making unusual efforts to rouse her flagging spirits this morning. She looks pale and tired — has been anxious about her father, no doubt. Anything is more natural than that she should not be paying attention to what he is saying!

Laurence Carr had been introduced into the world under circumstances which made it hard for him not to be a little vain. As is often the case, this was combined with a really low opinion of himself. This sounds paradoxical, but with a man of quick parts and keen susceptibility it is the natural consequence of finding an undue valuation set upon his attractions. Jealous of praise, and with considerable self-assertion, he had little self-belief. Thence his anxiety that his station and prospects should remain concealed from the Courteneys as long as possible, so as to test his own personal merits without the aid of adventitious advantages. Lamberti, on the other hand, was an entirely self-reliant man, who never doubted of his own judgment, his own powers, his own acts — yet with perfect indifference to the world's voice, and without a tinge of vanity.

Carr repeated to himself constantly that there was no doubt the girl liked him. The question was,

how much? And was he justified, he now began to ask himself, in pursuing this investigation, unless he had fully made up his mind how to act? He was uneasy on this score; and but for this sudden change in the young lady's manner, I am not sure that he might not have thought it expedient to pack his portmanteau and depart forthwith, before he had committed himself. Miss Courteney's absence of mind and depression, so different from the blithe, buoyant spirits to which he was accustomed, acted unconsciously on Carr as a counter-irritant. He forgot all about going away, and thought only of winning back the smiles to that sweet face.

He learnt that their departure from Bologna was actually decided on, though no day was yet fixed. If any other reason were wanting, besides her father's illness, to account for her depression, surely it was to be found in this. Could their intercourse be renewed elsewhere as it had been here? Hardly, without explanation on his part. And what explanation was he prepared to give? The question forced itself in this very distinct and practical form upon his mind, as he stood before Guido Reni's "Massacre of the Innocents." Not that there was any apparent connection between the two subjects, unless it was a sudden compunction of conscience that he was enacting the part of one of Herod's centurions upon the heart of the fair innocent beside him. But his words showed no symptom of what was passing within.

"If Guido Reni had always painted like this," he observed, after a short pause before the picture, "I shouldn't feel the contempt for him I generally do. There is no unmanly, maudlin affectation here. One hears that mother's agonized cry! — and the action, though violent, is not exaggerated. Perhaps choosing such a subject at all is an evidence of the unhealthiness of mind which afterwards showed itself in the sentimentality of upturned eyes and dishevelled locks; but there is no want of strength here. The story is only too well told — don't you agree with me?"

"Yes. It is exceedingly painful. It gives me no pleasure to look at. Let us turn to something else. Ah! it is a pleasure to look at 'Saint Cecilia' after that. What a sweet *singing* face it is! Do you believe the story of Francia's having died of mortification after seeing it?"

"Certainly not. Vasari is a horrid old gossip. Francia was much too fine a fellow to do anything of the sort. The picture, no doubt, produced a powerful effect on its arrival here, and probably owing to it so many of Francia's scholars — Innocenza da Tinola, and others — became followers of Raphael; but in all their best works they retain traces of Francia's great and earnest manner. As to 'Saint Cecilia,' I believe devoutly that she has been touched up and cleaned almost beyond recognition. That sky is like so many yards of dyed merino hung behind her. As to the 'Magdalene' in

the corner (how different to our 'Little Red Riding Hood' of Timoteo!), I'm afraid Raphael must be held responsible for *her*. Possibly Christian mythology, in which I am not well versed, may show some warrant for her being a giantess — but that ogling affectation! Let us hope it is a portrait taken before she reformed, otherwise it is likely to be prejudicial to the interests of virtue."

Gilda did not smile: her thoughts had wandered far, as her eye rested on the fine figure of Guido's "Samson" in another room.

"You like that picture?" said Carr, abruptly, piqued to find his remarks had been thrown away. "Very academic. The landscape is the best part of it."

"Perhaps so," said Gilda, rousing herself to reply. "I am no judge, you know. The figure strikes me as very vigorous and fine. Samson seems there a moral conqueror, and the dead Philistines around I could fancy representing the passions he has overcome."

"Then," said Carr, laughing, "it is Samson before he knew Dalilah, evidently. Your imagination clothes the picture with a poetry it hardly possesses in itself, Miss Courteney. Samson looks to me only like an Academy model. Stop! Now I look at the head more attentively it reminds me of your silent landlord, Lamberti. Do you see the likeness?"

Gilda coloured, but answered, without hesitation, "It reminds me also of Count Lamberti."

"Perhaps the resemblance, then, suggested those fine attributes with which you invest the Jewish Hercules?"

"Perhaps so," said the young lady, calmly.

"There is one point of dissimilarity," observed Carr, sarcastically, "that Lamberti makes so very little use of that implement of destruction — the jaw-bone of an ass."

He repented of the paltry witticism as soon as it was uttered. A look of speechless astonishment and indignation shot from Gilda's eyes, and she turned quickly away. Truly, her silence was more eloquent than any amount of remonstrance; and Carr felt it to be so. He did the only right thing under the circumstances, which, considering that his jealousy had been roused, was not so easy as it may appear.

"I sacrificed truth to a *bon-mot* when I said that, Miss Courteney — proving, I'm afraid, that *mine* is the ass's jaw! Though Count Lamberti does not honour me with his conversation — in spite of every advance of mine — I have reason to believe that he is a clever fellow, of a very different stamp from the generality of these young Italians. I may not admire his manners — that is a matter of individual opinion — but I should be sorry that you thought I treated any friend of yours contemptuously."

"Guido Lamberti *is* a great friend of ours," replied Gilda, fearlessly and warmly, "and if you knew him better, Mr. Carr, and all his noble qualities — his devotion to his old mother, his struggles

through poverty, and even worse troubles — his high-mindedness, and his chivalrous sacrifices to others, you — you would refrain from speaking slightingly of him, *not* because he is our friend, but because you would respect him too much — at least, I think so."

"It is worth his while to have been abused, to meet with so warm a defender in you, Miss Courteney."

The sarcasm of Carr's tone brought the blood again to Gilda's cheek; and then she was annoyed to feel herself colouring, which made her considerably worse. She began to wonder that she should ever have liked this Mr. Carr so much. To-day he seemed positively disagreeable to her; and she was quite glad when her mother, who had been sitting down to rest, joined them, suggesting that it was time to return home for their mid-day dinner.

As they were leaving the Academy, the Marchesa Onofrio, attended by a tall, military-looking man with blonde moustaches, entered, and Carr had to pass so close to her that he could scarcely avoid stopping to say a few words. The marchesa playfully reproached him with never coming to see her now, but added, with a glance towards the English ladies, who had walked on, that no doubt he was better engaged. She introduced her companion as a cousin — a Piedmontese officer — to whom she was actually showing the lions of Bologna. She had not

been inside the Accademia before, she did not know the time when!

Promising to pay a visit to her box that evening if possible (which meant, if he were not specially invited to the Casa Lamberti), he bowed, and hastened to rejoin his companions.

"Who is that lady?" asked Mrs. Courteney.

"The Marchesa Onofrio. She has more than once expressed to me her regret that you do not enter into society here. But I believe, unless you bring letters, none of these great ladies ever call on strangers."

"Oh, I have no desire, I assure you. We should only refuse their invitations."

"I quite understand. You have no doubt heard that the marchesa is very charming, but hardly the person you would wish Miss Courteney to be intimate with; and I suppose she is an average sample of Italian society."

"Indeed, I meant to express nothing of the kind," said Mrs. Courteney, colouring, "but the simple truth. We enter into *no* society, here or elsewhere. God forbid that I should throw stones at any woman!"

"And is it yet decided, Mrs. Courteney, where you go when you leave Bologna?" he said presently.

"Mr. Courteney has not made up his mind."

"Then your departure, I hope, is indefinite?"

"No. We shall leave this certainly in the

course of a few days. Mr. Courteney seldom makes up his mind till the night before we start where we are to go, and then very often changes it *en route*."

"Then how is one to know where you are gone?" asked Carr, with unusual directness for a young gentleman of the world.

"Oh!" replied Mrs. Courteney, evidently not choosing to understand the question as it was intended, "our correspondence — which is a very small one — comes through our bankers. We write to them when we have a place, and again when we are settled."

Carr began to grow alarmed. Was there a likelihood of his losing sight of her altogether? At all events, the pleasant prospect of an indefinite procrastination, which should bind him to nothing, diminished very rapidly. It was clear that no sort of encouragement would be held out to him to follow their wanderings. *The* question protruded itself more and more forcibly upon his mind as he retraced his solitary steps, after escorting the mother and daughter back to the Casa Lamberti. No hope had been expressed that he would return that evening. He was uneasy — dissatisfied.

In crossing the Piazza Maggiore he nearly ran against Count Razzi, whom he had occasionally met since he made his acquaintance in the Onofrio's box, and rather liked the good-natured, impulsive Italian. After shaking hands, Carr drew him aside from the

throng of the market-place towards the steps of San Petronio.

"I want to ask you a question or two touching this Guido Lamberti. You know him well, I think?"

"I have known him all my life, but I scarcely ever see him. He is too grave and steady for me, I am sorry to say, though he is a year or two younger."

"In the first place, can you tell me whether he has ever had any *affaire du cœur* — any *liaison?* Is he the *cavaliere servente* of any married lady here? or is he pining for some obdurate fair one? I know he doesn't go into society, but that is rather a reason for supposing him to be more agreeably employed."

"It is possible," replied the Italian, raising his eyebrows and shoulders simultaneously, and distending his hands — a traditional action expressive of ignorance. "It is possible; but I cannot affirm that it is so. *Sicuro*, no young fellow like Guido can live without the tender passion; and some months ago it was thought he was in love with *la bella Inglese* — the fair one, not the dark (who is worth fifty of the other, in my opinion, as you know.) They were often seen together then, but never now; so, I suppose, the old father put a stop to it. He is poor as a hundred devils — is Guido. But the girl is rich — why doesn't he carry her off, *I* say, if he is in love with her?"

"Ah! to be sure, why doesn't he? And so they were very intimate some time ago? And she is rich, too? It would be a famous marriage, then, for the indigent count."

"*Per appunto!* Just what I told him! Of course it would — but then Guido is proud, that may have something to do with it. I do believe he is capable of not marrying this Inglese, just because she *is* rich, and he hasn't a bajocco. Stupid, Signor Carr, ain't it? If La Sara with the black eyes had only this money! *Che diavolo!* I should have no scruples. But I am told she is not even a relation — some one they have taken into their house out of charity: is it so?"

"Something like it, I believe. Anyhow, you would find the bargain a dear one, Razzi. Do you know the young lady?"

"Not yet. *Pazienza*," and the Italian laid his forefinger on his nose — a movement full of esoteric meaning among his countrymen — "I shall make her acquaintance."

"Then you have not much time to lose," said Carr, laughing, as he shook hands once more with the count; "for she leaves Bologna in a few days."

Another meeting, apparently as accidental as the one just recorded, took place some hours later in the same day, at the corner of the vicolo in which the Casa Lamberti stood.

As Padre Stefano, with that deprecating shuffle which is the peculiar attribute of the Roman priest-

hood, was hastening on to his evening office of consoling the Countess Lamberti by the fresh imposition of prayer and penance, a figure closely veiled approached with a reverent inclination of the head, as though asking for the good father's blessing. He extended his hand, and mumbled some inarticulate benison; but even as he did so the figure uttered a word or two which seemed to arrest his attention.

"Whatever you may have to communicate to me, daughter, had better be said in the confessional. You will find me at San Domenico in an hour's time — in the third confessional on the right-hand side."

With this the figure glided silently by, like a shadow, and Padre Stefano shuffled on to the Casa Lamberti.

CHAPTER XIII.

As Guido entered his mother's ante-room that evening Nanna came up with an imperative gesture, desiring him on no account to disturb the devotional exercises of that saint, who was engaged with Padre Stefano.

"Why, I saw him going out of the house two hours ago! What sins has my poor mother committed between that time and this? Are we never to be free from these fellows at any hour?"

The old woman lifted up her hands in pious horror.

"To think that he should speak so! Instead of looking on it as a privilege to receive the good padre as often as he condescends to enter our doors! Come, sit you down, child, and I'll prepare you a *frittura* for your supper. You have got into a foolish habit of fasting lately, and look as miserable as a parched pea."

"Why, Nanna, I thought you approved of fasting?" said Guido, relaxing into a smile, as the old nurse bustled to and fro.

"Ah! I doubt its doing much good to *your* soul. It's not the proper sort of fasting, and comes of the devil, I believe."

"Well," said the young man, more gravely, but with the same indulgence he always showed to Nanna's peculiar opinions, "supposing I were to tell you that it was necessary to enable me to work? I cannot study when I am stuffed full of your *fritturas* and *salames* — and you know, my good Nanna, that I *must* work."

"*Che, che*," cried the old woman, impatiently. "The proverb says, '*E meglio un somaro vive, che un dottor' morto;*'* and if you starve yourself, where is the use of all your fine learning? No, no; the good padre is right. The devil tempts people to learn too much. It is a snare to pride, he says. As long as you were a child, you fed finely, and then you did not talk blasphemy against the Church as you do now."

"Only against Padre Stefano and his brethren, Nanna."

"It all comes of your learning!" continued the old woman wihout listening. "Why, as the padre says, look at our Blessed Lady and the saints, *they* never learnt anything, and yet they've got the finest thrones in Paradise — all gold and precious stones — so what is the use of learning things? It only spoils your digestion, and fills you with evil thoughts."

But the door at that moment opened, and Padre Stefano stepping out, in all the odour of sanctity, interrupted the conversation. He glanced with a

* A living ass is better than a dead doctor.

mild severity at the young man, who rose, as in courtesy bound, but did not attempt to solicit the reverend father's benediction, while Nanna pressed her withered lips fervently upon the snuffy, brown hand he extended. As she opened the opposite door to let the padre out, Guido turned at once, and entered his mother's room.

She was kneeling before the black crucifix in the corner, and did not turn round at the sound of the opening door. To judge from the movement of her lips, and the agitation of those clasped, attenuated hands, she was praying with even more than usual fervency. Her son heaved a deep sigh. Was his mother's mind to be thus more and more lacerated during the brief remainder of her days? The traces of fast and vigil were visible in increased emaciation and pallor. Was that a sight for men or angels to rejoice at? Her past blameless life gave those harpies of the Church too little hold to fasten on, but he knew how his own short-comings in orthodoxy were made use of to work upon her religious excitability. This thought always roused his ire more than anything else was capable of doing, and produced in him a frame of mind least of all favourable to the views of Father Stefano and Co.

The Countess Lamberti rose from her knees, and her son approaching, took her trembling hand in his, and led her to a seat.

"Guido, my son, I have much to say to you: sit you down here, when I can look into your face, as

I used to when you were a little boy. Ah! Guidoccio," she added, shaking her head, as she tenderly stroked his face. "I wish you were that little boy again! All my troubles about you have arisen since you grew to be a tall, learned man, and I have remained the same ignorant woman, so that you won't listen to my voice now, Guido, as you did then. Oh! my son! my son! that you *would* listen to me!"

"Have I ever refused to do so, mother? Since I have ceased to be a child, all the things that seem good to you do not seem so to me. But in you, mother, my belief and respect have never altered. We have differences of opinion. That is all. Why need that worry you, mother? Why should you let any one come between you and me? You have always done your duty conscientiously by me: do not be disquieted on my account now."

"I *am* disquieted," said Madame Lamberti, hastily wiping away the tears that came into her eyes, as though she were ashamed of evincing such weakness before her son, "much disquieted since —"

"Padre Stefano was here, of course. That is the special object of his visit."

"Yes," continued his mother, not understanding the sarcasm implied in her son's words. "It was, I believe, the only object of the benevolent padre's second visit. And, oh! my Guido, I have been praying to the blessed Saint Catherine — this is the eve of that holy virgin's day — and I have offered

her twelve candles for strength to help me to talk to you, my son; and that you may be enlightened to see the truth. Do not — oh! do not, my beloved Guido, turn a deaf ear to my words!"

The son sat quiet, looking gravely up into his mother's face.

"They tell me, my son, that a woman has enslaved your heart: one who is not of our country or — *religion*."

She paused. A flush overspread the young man's face, and he withdrew his hand from his mother's knee, where it rested: but he made no reply, waiting apparently for his mother to advance her accusation more distinctly before he did so.

"Ah! my son, tell me that this is not true! It cannot be! You will not bring my gray hairs in sorrow to the grave, by marrying a heretic — one who denies our holy communions! Why did I ever receive these English under our roof? I had a foreboding it could only bring tribulation on our house! Guido, my son, listen to me. I will go down on my knees to you not to do this thing."

The poor lady was so excited that she literally attempted to rise and put her words into execution. Her son's firm, calm hand held her down.

"Stay, mother: before I say anything, let me know all that your informer has thought fit to tell you concerning the matter you speak of."

The force of the son's character acted, as it always did, in calming Madame Lamberti's agitation.

"He says, Guido, that you have been for a long time in love with this English girl, and that you have made her in love with you, and that her parents are angered, and are leaving Bologna on this account! To think," added the poor mother, with a momentary touch of pride for which she subsequently, no doubt, fined herself heavily in Paternosters — "to think that any foreigner should be able to treat a Lamberti thus! That my son should be held in contempt by these English heretics! What witchery is there in this girl, my son? Might you not choose among the pious Catholics of our city a fairer bride? We are poor; but ours is an ancient house, and there is many a *partito* our good padre might offer you, Guido. And this English girl, whom you meet clandestinely in the garden, she will make you an *infidel*, and you will never have peace in this world or the next! Oh! Guido, my son, let not the snares of the flesh overcome you — break through them — break through them while you can! There is yet time — and the girl will marry this other Englishman, and go her way in peace."

Madame Lamberti's mind was in too perturbed a state to allow of her putting the information she had received in a more succinct and clear form: it oozed out, so to speak, between her warnings and entreaties. Guido gathered from it, however, to what extent truth and fiction had been cunningly interwoven before the tale was poured into his mother's ear. He replied resolutely, —

"Mother, you know I have never deceived you. You will believe me when I say that part of what you have heard is a malicious lie."

Madame Lamberti clasped her tremulous hands. "Tell me — tell me — it is not true that —"

"It *is* true that the only woman I have ever loved, or ever shall love on earth, is Signorina Courteney." He spoke almost in a whisper, but so clearly — so decisively — there was no mistaking his words.

The mother fell back in her chair, with a groan.

"It *is* true that I love," he continued, in the same low, ringing voice; "but she whom I love does not guess it, mother, and never will. Her heart will soon belong to this Englishman — if it is not his already. I met her by accident this morning: so much, again, is true — but no breath, no kind of love, passed my lips. I have carefully guarded the knowledge of it since I felt that, as a man of honour I ought not, I *could* not, seek to make her my wife. Latterly, I confess it, mother (I never thought to do so!), my passion has grown deeper and stronger — and I have fled the temptation more and more! I have gone there as little as was consistent with our old intimacy and the signore's great kindness to me. The signora reproaches me constantly with not visiting them oftener. Judge, then, whether it is likely that *I* am the cause of their departure from Bologna! It is a wicked fabrication. You have forced a confession from me, who do not frequent confessionals.

I believed the secret safe; and safe between us, mother, *it must remain* — do you understand? Since that prying Jesuit has discovered it — how, I care not to inquire — and has added his own —"

"Nay, *Guido mio*, do not speak disrespectfully of the padre."

"Well, well, mother, I will not if I can help it. But this matter concerns *me*, and me only. Will you do as I wish in the business, or shall I speak to Padre Stefano myself?"

"No, no," cried the poor lady, alarmed at the idea; "tell me what you would have me do."

"Be silent."

"But not from the padre, my son? How can I?"

"You will simply tell him that I have satisfied your mind on this question, without entering into any explanation."

"But — but," hesitated the countess, as she looked anxiously into her son's face; "after all, Guido, you *are* in love with the English girl — you do not deny it — and though at my entreaties you give her up now —"

"Stay, mother: undeceive yourself. Your entreaties have nothing to say to this. I have fought and striven with my passion, and have hidden it jealously from mortal eyes for months past. It is no question of giving up *now:* my whole life latterly has been one long sacrifice."

"Will you, then," pursued his mother, with a pertinacity that never lost sight of its object — "will

you, then, promise me solemnly, my son, never, under any circumstances, to marry this girl? I have not long to live, Guido, and I should leave this world of trouble with a mind more at ease about you, if I had the assurance from your own lips that you would *never* do this thing. Will you promise me?"

The young man started up, and took a hasty turn through the apartment. Then he stopped before his mother with folded arms.

"You do not know what you are asking of me. I cannot make such a promise, mother. Though I tell *you*, and I tell *myself* fifty times a day, that I have not the most distant hope of ever making her mine, yet — yet — O my God! *never* is a hard word! All my passionate love rises in rebellion against making such a promise. I cannot do it. Don't ask me, mother. Be content with what I have told you. My soul would not take such an oath, though my lips did!"

"You do not love your poor old mother, or you would not refuse what is perhaps her last request," sobbed the old lady.

"Your request is unreasonable," said the young man, almost sternly.

"Nay, but what can I say to the good padre? Can I tell him that you have satisfied me? Alas! I shall not die at peace with this dread upon me — that my son will marry a heretic when I am gone!"

He choked the sigh that rose, and replied, indirectly, —

"If you will live better, mother, we shall keep house here together, you and I, for many a year yet; and if you would only send these meddling priests about their business, you might be happy, and —"

Madame Lamberti shook her head sadly, and raised her hand.

"I must fast and pray for you, without intermission, during the short time I have to stay with you, Guido; and the Blessed Virgin may, perhaps, be pleased to open your eyes from their spiritual blindness."

"It is your priests who make me blind. *They* stand between me and faith!" he said, almost fiercely; then added, in a calmer tone, "but forgive me, mother. You know I never willingly open a discussion on these matters. I cannot but wound your susceptibilities: and now, least of all, when I am suffering, and seeing *you* suffer from the meddlesome interference of your confessor. Do you consider yourself bound to tell him all that has passed between us?"

Madame Lamberti hesitated.

"If he presses the point — yes."

"Then you may add that if he makes any use whatever of the knowledge so gained from you, under the sacred seal of confession; and that it transpires, as it assuredly will, he shall feel that the effects of an Italian's just indignation and wrath may be as terrible as that vulgar passion called *re-*

venge. I will brand him as a perjurer before the whole Catholic world; his own Church shall spurn him: the opinion of all honourable men would not have much effect."

The countess rose, not without a touch of dignity in her manner, though her thin hand trembled on the table for support.

"If you can only use this language touching one whom I so greatly revere, you had best be silent. Indeed, I feel I have had need of meditation and prayer. Good-night, Guido."

And, for the first time in the remembrance of either, mother and son parted for the night without benediction or embrace. His heart reproached him with having spoken too vehemently. The words came, he knew, with double force from him, who was so self-contained in general. Ere he had closed the door he lingered for a moment, and would have turned back. But already a tremulous voice in the corner of the room was rising in its fervent supplication —

"O Virgine santissima! O Madre di misericordia, e Rifugio di noi, miseri peccatori, vi prego . . ."

He heard no more, but closed the door abruptly. The channels of the son's tenderness, alas! were likely now to be turned aside by whatever reminded him of a religion against which he felt more and more rebellious and resentful.

CHAPTER XIV.

My readers — the gentle ones especially — will have discovered by this time that Guido Lamberti was by no means a perfect character. They will complain of his unbending pride — his hardness — his "want of religion." They will feel but little sympathy with the motives which prompted him to struggle with the passion at his heart; he will be called "cold." For whereas human nature, in the aggregate, regards with a loving pity the spectacle of strong temptation yielded to, strong temptation resisted is a species of heroism to which, secretly, the world is not partial, however it may sermonize. It accords its frigid tribute of respect; but its sympathies are kept for those who have yielded, and suffered, and repented.

All this I feel strongly as I write. I, who knew the man — who came into personal contact with those many-sided fragments of individuality, which, joined cunningly together by the Great Artist, go to make up the mosaic of character — who knew all he had had to contend with, and how the circumstances of that early life moulded the whole after-career — I feel the difficulty of the task I have set myself. To bring that portrait before my readers,

eyes in such colours, and painted with such careful and delicate touches as shall incline him to take some small portion of the interest I have felt in passages of this man's life, requires, I fear, an abler hand than mine.

The effects of a despotism of any kind on a proud and sensitive nature are always disastrous; how much more so when that despotism is a religious one! As a boy, the young Lamberti had writhed under the tutelage of priests: his father's muttered curses against the bondage in which they dwelt found a ready soil, took deep root, and bore vigorous fruit in the young Guido's mind. During the year he spent at Florence, where his education was carried on in a more enlightened spirit, and under the influence of more liberal opinions than dared then be manifested in Bologna, the youth's views on social and political matters had first taken something like a distinct shape and consistency. The subsequent years, in which he studied at the university of his native city, brought him into contact with several young men who shared and discussed these views among themselves. They were mostly from the middle classes — the *mezzo ceto*, as it is termed; and in a land where the distinctions of rank are still so jealously preserved, but for his becoming a student, the young Count Lamberti would probably never have met them. Some few were noble, like himself; but their number was small, and their intellectual development, generally speaking, languid

— brave, imprudent fellows, profuse of words, but not to be counted on as any great acquisition of strength to the Liberal party. Their views on all other points were not Guido's. They discussed their successes in love — their prospects of marrying so many thousand *scudi*, with a woman attached thereto — the opera, the ballet, and the *caccia*. Among his fellow-students of less exalted birth, Guido oftener found the higher mental qualities upon which he felt that hopes could alone be built of Italy's regeneration. Hence it was with these latterly that he almost entirely consorted. Hence that he regarded with indifference akin to contempt the claims of ancient birth. But pride of another sort he had, as we have seen. His poverty, and the manner of his life, shunning general society, and living with a small knot of men of energetic minds and extreme opinions, confirmed and strengthened points in his character, which, under different circumstances, might have long lain dormant.

Six years had passed since he first beheld Gilda Courteney. He was then seventeen. During this time her childish image had ever reigned paramount in his heart, and had preserved it from the sullying influence of more transient passions; until now, within the last few months, the mirage of his boyish imagination had taken a substantial form, exercising a subtle and dangerous power over all his senses. He fled, alarmed at the extent of the influence to which he felt he was submitting. The struggles

that followed have been here faintly indicated; it is with their results that we are now more immediately concerned.

Having, Asmodeus-like, lifted the roof of the Casa Lamberti on this particular evening, and having taken a glimpse into that melancholy apartment where the countess and her son have just parted, we shall take the opportunity of glancing into another in the same house (apologizing to the ladies as we enter — but entering all the same).

Gilda and Sara occupied one room. Not for lack of accommodation — rather the reverse. It is nervous work being the sole occupant of half an acre of bed-room; particularly when the wind has a habit of whistling through the chinks of the great oak door (which has no lock, only a bolt drawn across), and the ill-fitting windows imitate the rattling of bones and the chattering of teeth in the dead of night. Gilda was no heroine, and requested, the very first moment she was inducted to this vast tapestried apartment, that Sara might share it with her.

It may be asked what was the nature of the tie subsisting between the two girls. On Sara's side the course of events will soon show: on Gilda's it was the genuine, warm-hearted pity of a young enthusiastic nature for Sara's friendless position; a genuine admiration for her great and various abilities; but an utter absence of all sympathy with her companion's opinions and mode of viewing life.

Sara was, in the most extensive sense of the word, very clever. Every action of her life into which passion did not enter — and her passions being strong carried her away too often — was a matter of calculation. These calculations were not only complete to the extremest fraction; they were conceived generally on a broad, bold scale. Thus the coarse arts of flattery and hypocrisy (I allude now to her general demeanour) were but rarely employed, and then only in such subtle infusions as were safe from detection. If it cannot be said that she appeared what she really was, at least she allowed so much of her own wayward self to appear as rendered it difficult for those who knew her best — even in after years, when they had a clearer insight into her character — to pronounce how, and in what proportions, art and nature were welded into one another. She had too much of the wisdom of the serpent not to know that the meekness of the dove would ill become her. She was too astute not to see that the acting of a character entirely foreign to her own, day after day, and month after month, must be detected sooner or later. The moment must come when the mask would drop, and then her game would be up. Better than this — because in the long run safer — was it to show from the very first such portions of her strange, ill-regulated mind as she dared display, and thus accustom her kind protectors, the Courteneys, into "making allowances" for almost everything she did. It was a somewhat

dangerous experiment, for it might naturally be supposed that Mr. Courteney would feel averse to allowing his daughter to associate with Sara on terms of such extreme intimacy. But her cleverness, as we have seen, carried her through this. The exceeding leniency, pushed almost to weakness, of Mrs. Courteney's judgments was borne out in this case by the remarkable toleration Mr. Courteney showed towards the Creole girl's strange whims and manners. That a man so fastidious and so irritable should not long since have dismissed from his household a girl whose unscrupulous tongue caused him to wince occasionally under that marble exterior, was one of those inconsistencies we pronounce at once as incomprehensible.

She was now seated before a dressing-table in the centre of the room, unfastening the long coil of black hair which fell in a rippling wave upon her shoulders. If she glanced up with a piercing look of inquiry every now and then at the spotted green mirror before her, it assuredly was not from motives of vanity, for the image there presented to her was distorted, as if by paralysis, and could hardly be a gratifying object of study to the person reflected. But as she raised those round and polished arms, and the white fingers were leisurely employed in freeing the masses of her ebony hair from the confines of comb and bodkin, her gaze travelled through the dim twilight which two guttering wax candles afforded in the room, and fastened upon the figure of Gilda seated, partially undressed, at the foot of

her bed. She had been there for the last twenty minutes, silent and motionless, her eyes fixed upon the pine-wood embers smouldering on the hearth. She had unfastened her dress, but beyond that seemed in no hurry to proceed. The contrast between the slight, almost infantine figure of the one girl, with her pink gown hanging loosely round her, her listless attitude and face of dreamy thoughtfulness, and the finely developed proportions of the other, revealed in every movement of her arms, under the white dressing-gown, with those strange coal-black eyes gleaming out from under them — this contrast would have struck any artist as suggestive of a picture, though there are but few who could have painted it.

After a long pause, unbroken by a word, Sara said, abruptly, —

"Gilda, why don't you undress?"

"I don't feel tired. I shan't be able to sleep if I go to bed."

"You are out of spirits. Well! what is it?"

"Nothing."

"You are low at the prospect of leaving Bologna, and your friends here, eh?"

Gilda was silent.

"Never mind, dear. There's one of them who will follow you all round the world. Take my word for it."

Gilda turned her head suddenly towards the speaker, with a look of animated inquiry.

"Mr. Laurence Carr" (Gilda sank again into listlessness) "will certainly follow us to Florence. He told me as much himself."

"Oh!"

"*Cara mia!* under all that apparent simplicity, you are a profound little hypocrite. As if you didn't see that this young gentleman is desperately in love with you, and as if you were not perfectly well aware that he is an excellent *parti*. He is only keeping his real station a secret in order that you may fall in love with himself *alone*. Then he'll throw aside his disguise, like the prince in a fairy tale, and come out covered with gold and jewels. But all this you knew as well as I did long ago."

"Are you jesting, Sara?"

"Never was more serious in my life."

"I haven't an idea what you mean."

"Oh! I should think not! Of course, with your air of simplicity, you didn't know he was Lord Carrlyon's only son?"

"No; and I don't see how the discovery is to affect me in any way."

"Oh, you provoke me, Gilda! Pray be natural with *me*, if you can. Don't pretend not to see what it's impossible any one can be blind to."

"If you really mean what you say," said Gilda, colouring, "I believe you are quite mistaken. Mr. Carr is very kind to me, and very pleasant, and I like him *very* much — when — when he's not sarcastic and disagreeable; but I'm sure he doesn't

think of anything else, and I should be very sorry if he did."

"If you don't care for him, you have been behaving very badly to him, that's all I have to say! You have always shown a marked partiality for his society."

"Oh, Sara! — you don't mean — you surely don't think that I — it's impossible. I *do* like Mr. Carr very much. I like to talk and listen to him: and he's been very kind to me — but — but —"

"These are usually supposed to be symptoms of preference," said the other, sarcastically.

"Not of the same sort," said Gilda, hesitating and colouring again. "There are people — with whom one never exchanges a word from one week's end to the other — and yet one feels nearer to them than — than — to — to those whom one has constant intercourse with."

"I really don't understand you. When a man devotes some hours daily to a woman, and that she submits with *more* than complacency to this devotion, it is usually supposed in the world that such 'constant intercourse' portends something nearer. In short, such conduct on the woman's part is called *giving encouragement* — and this you have most decidedly done."

Gilda looked greatly distressed, but said nothing for a minute or two.

"No!" she exclaimed at last, shaking her head. "Mr. Carr isn't in earnest, and I don't believe he

misconstrues anything I have ever said or done. He's fond of society, and he likes us: and perhaps, my ignorance amuses him, and he is kind enough to teach me — but, oh, no! he isn't in love."

"You are conversant, then, with all the symptoms of the disease?"

Her sharp, white teeth flashed like some savage animal's, in the glass, as she spoke.

"I know, at least, when it is *not*," replied Gilda, with a half-sigh: and the words were a mournful echo of her own secret thought. But Sara would not abandon her prey so easily.

"You are aware, I suppose, of the extraordinary *ruse* by which he obtained admittance into this house. Most people would say that such a proceeding indicated 'love at first sight.'"

"You deal in riddles to-night, Sara. I don't know what you allude to, the least."

"To his having bribed our driver to break our carriage on the top of the Apennines, in order that Mr. Carr might bring us home in his own. If you doubt the story, ask Marietta. She wormed it out of his courier, at last — when, I suppose, he thought there was no longer any necessity for concealment. But *I* was sure of it from the very first."

Gilda stared and looked almost frightened. Her companion burst out laughing — that hard little laugh peculiar to herself.

"I don't like stories that come through servants, Sara, and I shan't believe anything on that kind of

authority," said Gilda, with some warmth. "Not that it signifies to me whether this is true or not."

"Except inasmuch as it shows how resolved Mr. Carr was to know you. 'If these things were done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?' If this ardent young gentleman went through so much in order to know you, what is he not prepared to undergo in order to win you?"

"Very little, I hope," replied Gilda, quietly. "But forewarned is forearmed. I shall remember what you say, and take care to avoid misleading him any more during the short time we remain here."

"Then you will be acting like a little fool." The angry flash of the eye that accompanied this was as instantly veiled, and Sara proceeded in a quiet, compressed voice —

"If you were as careful not to be the cause of uneasiness and dissension in other quarters it would be as well."

Gilda looked at the speaker with wide-open eyes, but her hands unconsciously clasped each other tighter.

"Are you mad to-night, Sara? What does all this mean? What cause of uneasiness can I be to any one?"

"You are one to the Countess Lamberti."

The young girl turned pale as death, and murmured —

"How so?"

"Because you are a heretic; and that she would sooner see her son *dead*, I believe, than married to one. Yet she knows that you have exerted all your

arts to fascinate him, though you do not care for him a rush! and he has the good sense to avoid you as much as possible. Any man's head may be turned by flattery — that silent flattery which consists in looks as much as anything; but Count Lamberti knows that such a marriage would be productive of nothing but misery. You have already sown dissension between him and his mother. If you have any friendship for him, you should imitate his line of conduct."

Flesh and blood could not stand this. Even Gilda's gentle nature rebelled against the coarseness of Sara's diatribes. The tears gathered in her eyes, but she spoke distinctly enough, while her cheek flushed with indignation.

"You have no right to speak thus. It is most false and cruel, Sara. Guido Lamberti and I are old friends, but I never have done anything to warrant your ungenerous taunts; and I don't believe a bit more what you say about Madame Lamberti than I do your story about Mr. Carr!"

"Go and pay her a visit. See how she receives you."

"She has always discouraged our visits, and shunned us on account of our religion. Therefore that is not to the point. I daresay she *has* objected to Guido's being so much with us, and he has come much less often lately — perhaps in consequence. I see nothing in that to justify your statements."

"Very well, my dear, as you like," replied the other, and a smile came over the dark face which

appeared most baneful in the crooked reflection of the mirror. "I only spoke for your good. You will act, of course, as you think best; but you may rely on the *fact*. Madame Lamberti is only counting the hours until you are out of the house; and as you don't care for the poor fellow, really the kindest thing to do would be to leave him in peace -- not to try and awaken his pity by appearing broken-hearted at leaving Bologna. Men are so weak, there is no knowing what they may not do from vanity and pity combined."

"You may be quite easy about Guido Lamberti," said Gilda, in a steady voice, but with quivering lip.

Sara had not miscalculated the effect of her words. She foresaw that, however indignantly Gilda might repudiate the imputation, the wound would rankle, and the poison impregnate her whole being.

She carefully adjusted the silk net into which her hair was gathered for the night, and having satisfied herself that it was securely fastened, she turned round, saying, with a laugh —

"And now, *cara mia*, to turn to more important subjects, how do you intend to have that blue dress of yours made?"

But no reply came. Gilda was on her knees at the foot of the bed, saying her evening prayer. The poor child was praying fervently for his welfare and happiness — she did not think of her own.

And the two girls spoke to each other no more that night.

CHAPTER XV.

This same night was a sleepless one to the young Englishman, tossing to and fro in a state of feverish excitement under his eider-down quilt at the San Marco. He had spent the evening in the marchesa's box, not having received an invitation, as he hoped, from the Casa Lamberti. He was absent, and the marchesa for the first time found the handsome young Englishman very dull company. She shrewdly guessed the cause, however, and was too good-natured to take offence; for he made the most laughable efforts to appear lively. But, in the terse language of the schools, it was "no go." The marchesa rallied him with some pointed, but playful allusions to the fair *Inglese* she had seen him with that morning. The heavy Piedmontese officer, with whom she seemed on the most easy terms of intimacy, was in the box, and one or two others came in. There was a good deal of noisy rattle, but, alas! instead of finding it entertaining, as he had done the first night or two, Carr thought it insupportably tedious, and finally made his escape before the opera was over. He smoked his cigar for half an hour in the street, and saw the marchesa's sedan pass, with its escort of Piedmontese cavalry; then

Blangini and Razzi came by, the latter singing with great energy —

"La donna è mobile;"

in which sentiment Carr felt disposed to agree; and threw away the end of his cigar, with misanthropic feelings towards the whole sex.

But this was only one phase — a passing one — of the malady under which he laboured. It was quickly succeeded by the question whether life could be endurable without one particular *donna*. And he began to be alarmed at the answer his heart gave, or that he thought it gave, which came to the same thing. He had scarcely yet contemplated seriously the prospect of making Gilda Courteney his wife. Now it was thrust before his eyes so that he could not refuse any longer to see that the only alternative to this was breaking off all intercourse with the family at once, and striving to forget her as best he might. The first obvious reflection was that his parents would be strenuously opposed to the marriage. His mother would sooner cut off her right hand than that her only son should marry a "nobody." To this objection on the part of Prudence, Youth replied recklessly, that he had always told his mother he should marry to please himself, and not for rank or fashion, or any other worldly consideration. He was dependent on his father, it was true; but Lord Carrlyon would surely not carry his resentment (or, rather, her ladyship's) so far as not to allow his son and

heir a suitable allowance when he was once married, and the thing was beyond recall? This line of argument clearly pointed to a marriage without the knowledge of his parents, if he could persuade the Courteneys to consent to this. But had he any certain assurance that Gilda cared for him? Might he not have been playing with edgetools, and find himself wounded, while he had left no impression in return? He repeated this question over and over again anxiously to himself. Her manner to-day had puzzled him. Had he been too backward in declaring his intentions clearly (if they could even now be called clear)? Perhaps so. Her sensitive nature would shrink from betraying her feelings for one who had never openly avowed his own. Why should he not avow them? Why should he fly from her? Would it not have a touch of romance and chivalry, this marrying against all the world's prejudices?

And wasn't she far too good for him? He might dazzle all the rest of the world, but he didn't blind himself. He acknowledged that he wasn't worthy of that rare prize. He knew what her training had been by that most charming mother — wasn't that mother herself sufficient guarantee? His two aunts and his six cousins were all ready to pick holes in whomsoever he should marry on his own responsibility. Well, they would find it difficult to invent any fault in Gilda. The simple distinction of her manners was borne out in her mind: he did not dread

the criticism of any number of London *salons* for the one, or of carping old maids for the other.

Then it was an inestimable blessing of which he did not fail to remind himself when enumerating the favourable points of the question, as he tossed to and fro in his bed, that Gilda had neither brother nor sister — nothing that could be *à charge* in after life; only that very charming mother, who would be an ornament to any society, and Mr. Courteney, who, although he was not connected with the D— family, was undoubtedly a gentleman-like, well-educated man, quiet, and retiring, who would not be wanting to thrust himself upon the Carrlyon connections. In short, it was clearly impossible his mother *could* call any of them vulgar. She would hate them, of course, and it was probable that Gilda would not be very happy just at first whenever Lady Carrlyon and she were together. What should he do if he saw her wretched? He knew his mother's prejudice and temper, and to see any one who was dear to him suffering under these would be insupportable.

Here adverse winds began to drift his barque upon the shoals of doubt and despondency. What if Mr. Courteney refused his daughter's hand until Lord Carrlyon's consent was obtained? And if the affair were definitively broken off, or that he ordered post-horses to-morrow, and fled from the danger, would not life have lost half its savour to him? Could he look forward to a purposeless wandering from city to city, and then a return to the treadmill

of London society, without loathing? But then if his father really *did* cut off his supplies, and that he were reduced to supporting himself by painting? As to the rumour that Mr. Courteney was a man of great wealth, and that Gilda was an heiress, Carr had seen and heard enough of an Italian belief in the unbounded riches of every Englishman to give it no credence. It was not likely Mr. Courteney would live in the very retired way he was doing if he were a man of substance. Carr, to do him justice, would have been disappointed to find that Gilda *had* a large fortune. It would have robbed his devotion of half its grand self-sacrifice. But, for the first time, he cursed his inaptitude for definite hard work, which had prevented his following any profession, whereby he might have been independent. Supposition and contingency followed so close on each other in his heated imagination, that he found nothing like a distinct answer to any of these perplexing doubts.

One image floated darkly across his mind now and then, without his being able to account exactly for its exercising such a disagreeable influence over him. That image was of a tall, reserved young man, with whom he had held but little intercourse, and of whom, in reality, he knew nothing. Certainly he had little ground for his vague jealousy of Guido Lamberti beyond the few careless words of Razzi. These referred to a Bolognese rumour which had already, according to his informer, died away. Nothing that Carr had seen would arouse or confirm such

a suspicion; although he proved that such a suspicion existed from having, in the first instance, questioned Razzi on the subject. In vain Carr reminded himself that, on the rare occasions when Guido joined the party in Mrs. Courteney's drawing-room, he scarcely ever addressed himself particularly to Gilda. Nor had Carr ever detected any symptoms of secret preference for the Italian in Miss Courteney herself; and yet, in spite of every reasonable assumption to the contrary, he felt a vague apprehension that from this quarter some obstacle to his future happiness might arise.

Like all people of good digestion, who sleep well, Laurence regarded a bad night as a calamity of the most portentous nature. He must be very ill. This mental anxiety was telling on his constitution. It visibly affected his temper (or "his nerves," he would probably have termed it), and it rendered his organ of combativeness very conspicuous. His college friends used to say (and who should know one so well as one's college friends?) that the only way Laurence would ever get to Heaven was by being dragged violently — in the opposite direction. This characteristic was, of course, doubly apparent when his mind was in a state of extreme tension and excitement. By a judicious amount of contradiction, he might have been led to adopt any extravagant measure at such times. On this occasion it came in the most appropriate form — a conjoint letter from his father and mother.

Giuseppe drew back the thin muslin curtains and presented the letter to his master, as he lay in bed, observing, with a thrift with which his habits of vicarious expenditure were hardly consistent, that he had had to pay double postage for it.

Carr propped up the flimsy bolster, and by dint of sundry thumps induced it to perform the part of a support to his back, as he raised himself in that disordered couch and tore open the cover. His mother's were the first sheets that fell out. To these was added a single one in his honoured father's hand. It was so seldom Lord Carrlyon ever wrote to his son, that curiosity, I fear, as much as anything else induced Carr to read this first: —

"My dear Boy, — I am sorry to say the N. and D. Railway Company, of which I am one of the directors and original shareholders, has failed, and I have to pay down a large sum, *at once*. There is nothing for it but selling the Clapton farm, as I can't lay my hand on any ready money, and I won't borrow if I can *help it*. Of course, you will give me your signature to the deed of sale, as it can't be done without. I have told Scroggins to send you the necessary papers; and I *hope* that the twelve thousand pounds which the farm will fetch may cover my liabilities. Your grandfather bought it. It is not part of the original Carrlyon estate. I have very heavy expenses; and the mines, I am afraid, are not going on as well as they did. I would not

ask you to part with the land, if I could help it, my dear Laurence. I hope you will come home soon.

"Your affectionate father,

"CARRLYON."

The son threw down this bald, disjointed epistle with a flushed cheek, and took up his mother's. After many lamentations on the necessity for alienating any portion of the estate which she "understood" was necessary, her ladyship went on to remark, —

"Of course I do not care about the *land;* but it has such a bad effect in the county, selling property, that I am very much annoyed. However, your father tells me it must be done; though I cannot see, with his fine property, why it could not be raised in some other way — only twelve thousand pounds! He proposed my giving up London next season, and reducing the establishment here; but, of course, that was not to be heard of — the way to make people talk more than ever! What is much more reasonable is that he should give up his hunting, which, at his time of life, there is a *natural* excuse for doing — people can't think it odd. You can't think how all this has worried me, my dear boy, particularly as we had a house full of people (Cortly, the historian, among others — so interesting!), and I was obliged to attend to them, and your father was shut up with

lawyers and horrid men of business all the time, and could not go out shooting with any of the party. I wish your father had never had anything to do with railroads! He frightens me by saying that his responsibilities do not end even *here*, and that he may be called on for double that amount; but that I never can believe. You are my comfort in all this, dear boy; for I know, in the first place, that you will not hesitate to sign whatever he asks you, though it may be very painful to you to do so; and next, I have such confidence in your making a match which will relieve your father and me from all our present anxieties! You will, I hope, duly feel the *responsibility* which rests on you now, and how doubly necessary it is that you should marry *well*. If you do not come home at once (we shall be having a very *recherché* party here for the new year, and I think of giving a ball), I hope your good feeling will lead you to go on to Rome, or to return to Paris, and not *waste your time* in a stupid place like Bologna, where you can meet with no *opportunities* such as you ought to be looking out for. What amusements you find there I can't think — the more so, as you seem, from your last letter, to have given up the only society worth knowing — that of the Onofrios and Ortolanis. As to those English people you write about, I wonder you have the bad taste to prefer those sort of second-rate *settlers* to the native society of the place. Poor dear Lord Byron once said to me, "I hate my own country people!" When I am

abroad I often think how right he was! Talking of Lord B., I hope you have been *writing* something. I showed Cortly those sweet things, and he said you had germs. If you remain abroad, a poem — something in the *Childe Harold* style, with just a *dash* of the *Don Juan* to make it go down with a certain set — would keep your name before the world, and prevent your being forgotten. But, my dearest Laury, though I say this, I do trust you *will* return before long. They *say* there is a chance of the borough being vacant next year, and you ought to be doing popularity here before that. Lord Alverton's daughter comes out next season, too — and you know how anxious I have always been in *that* quarter. Such a nice girl! so well brought up! such principles, besides her two hundred thousand pounds! Yes! my dearest boy, you must positively *not* waste any more precious time in that stupid, dirty town, but come back and console me in all my troubles and anxieties. — As ever,

"Your fondly attached mother,"

&c. &c.

It was with no very pleasant sensations, as may be imagined, that Carr read these two letters. It was clear his father's affairs were not in the condition he had been brought up to believe they were. Lord Carrlyon must have been living at the extremity of his income for years past not to be able to lay his hand on this comparatively small sum of

money. But it was not this that affected Carr nearly so much as might have been imagined. He had constantly affirmed that he was indifferent about money: and though when he used to say this, he forgot to add that he was not indifferent to those refinements of life which money alone can procure, it was very true that he had never been extravagant, and the probabilities were that he would reconcile himself to a reduced fortune better than most men. He cared more about parting with a single acre of the family property. If that could have been prevented, he would have been content to be a poorer man for the rest of his life. It wounded his Achilles' heel — that small vulnerable point of pride in the old family residence and unbroken succession of so many miles of fair English land which, together with a spotless name, he expected would have been transmitted to him intact.

But now, even this consideration faded into insignificance before the increased difficulties to his marriage which must inevitably arise. And, while he read his mother's letter, his irritation became greater — his antagonism more and more roused. Why should he sacrifice his happiness because his father chose to speculate in railways, and his mother to be recklessly extravagant? What right had any one to dictate whom or how much he was to marry? Did they expect him to sign a marriage contract as readily as this deed of sale of a farm? They would find themselves mistaken. He had had enough of

all this worldliness; he was sick to death of hearing of women with two hundred thousand pounds. Such a thing ought not to be allowed. It was tempting poor devils to sell themselves. At all events he was resolved —

What to do? Why, to write to his father at once, and tell him, without hesitation, that he was going to be married, and that he would be happy to sign away any number of farms, if he obtained his father's consent. But stay! Was not this somewhat premature — plunging himself into hot, nay, boiling water with his father and mother before he had ascertained distinctly the state of Gilda's heart, and had spoken to Mr. Courteney?

This was clearly the first thing to be done, and he would not write to England until his mind was satisfied on this point. Having come to which resolution, he leapt out of bed, and began dressing with an energy and expedition which perfectly amazed Giuseppe.

CHAPTER XVI.

Mr. Courteney had been very ill all night. The Italian doctor had been sent for early that morning, and, while he pronounced him in no immediate danger, told Mrs. Courteney it would be most precarious for her husband to travel for some time to come. The cold Tramontana wind, which at this season is so prevalent, might be fatal to him. He must be carefully watched, and kept as quiet as possible.

Yet here he was, at twelve o'clock in the day, lying on the sofa, looking more bloodless than ever, but in discussion with his wife, despite her earnest entreaties that he would not exert himself.

"I have not been a great talker for the last five-and-twenty years — and I have not very long left to say what I want," he replied, with a grim smile. "It is folly to shut one's eyes to the fact that I may die any moment. If I could only see the child respectably married, with no more than the *average* risk of being wretched for life —"

"Oh, Henry, do not talk in that bitter way!"

"I repeat, that if I could see her married to any honest man, who was likely to be kind to her, I should be only too much obliged to any one who

would put me out of my misery. I suffer horribly — it can't go on long."

"What can I do to give you any comfort?" said his distressed wife.

"Get this matter settled one way or the other, if we are to remain here an indefinite time. This fellow Carr is probably only amusing himself; but what is sport to him may be death to her. Have you any idea whether she cares for him?"

"I am puzzled: sometimes I think she does; but I have always carefully avoided speaking to her on the subject, for fear of putting the idea into her head."

"Well, as it is evident that your ideas about Guido Lamberti were delusions — though I should infinitely prefer him, with all his disadvantages, to this garrulous young gentleman — I have no objection to Mr. Carr as a son-in-law, provided the girl likes him. He *is* a gentleman. That is something. I have watched him pretty narrowly, and though he's not made of very strong stuff, there's nothing radically bad. If he were a hard-working man, like Lamberti, I should be better pleased. For twenty years I have known what it is to be idle — without an object — without a career. It doesn't improve a man's amiability. Ambition and energy stagnant — the mind preying on itself," he added, bitterly. "But as it is, what I have seen of the man is rather in his favour, — and you know how important it is that the child should be *married*."

"But you would not hurry on her choice, with the risk of her repenting it later?"

"Certainly not: but I would also guard her from the risk of falling a prey to any sharper after I am dead. Remember what your position is, and will be. Never forget that we are *outcasts from society*. The only line of conduct you can carry on with dignity and safety is that I have always adopted — to stand firmly on your own ground, resisting every attempt to draw you from it. By doing thus, you will spare yourself much future misery. But the girl — don't you see that her position will be doubly perilous? In God's name, if she and this Englishman like each other, let them be married. If not, it is better he went his way."

"It is strange," said Mrs. Courteney, "that the last two or three days she seems to avoid him."

"Then she likes him. But she inherits your temperament, and is likely to be guided by her impulses. They are dangerous guides. Talk to her. See what she says."

"Oh, Henry!" said his wife, through her sobs; "don't say she is like me. You scarcely know her. You don't, indeed. She has far more strength and decision of character than you give her credit for. I know what you think — that I am not fit to guide her, not fit to take care of her when — when you're gone: but —"

"Your task will be a difficult one, and it would

relieve you of a weight of anxiety if it were settled before I go. Perhaps, I have not much faith in woman's strength of character under such circumstances. At all events, I believe it would be both for the girl's happiness and yours, if she were established respectably now, and left you to end your days in peace."

While he was speaking Marietta entered. The "Signor Inglese" was at the door, craving to see either Mr. or Mrs. Courteney.

It was the third time he had called, with the same success — simple denial. He learnt from Marietta that Mr. Courteney was no worse — in no immediate danger; and, as there appeared to be little prospect of Carr's seeing the ladies of the family (Gilda, pleading her father's illness, scarcely left her room), the next morning he could restrain himself no longer; and, resolving to end this miserable state of uncertainty one way or another, he despatched the following note to Mr. Courteney: —

"My dear Sir, — I am sorry to learn that your serious illness is the cause of my being denied the pleasure of seeing Mrs. Courteney and your daughter, when I called both yesterday and the day before. As I fear it may be some time before your hospitable doors are again open to me (for I understand that Mrs. and Miss Courteney are in close attendance on you), I write to ask whether you are well enough to grant me the favour of a short interview on a

subject of vital importance to me and my future happiness. You may possibly divine what that subject is. Should you be unequal to the exertion of receiving me, perhaps I might be allowed to see Mrs. Courteney. Otherwise, I would endeavour to express myself as fully as I can on paper.

"Believe me, my dear sir,

"Ever most sincerely yours,

"LAURENCE."

To this note Carr received the following laconic reply, half an hour afterwards: —

"DEAR SIR, — I shall be happy to hear what you have to say at four o'clock.

"Faithfully yours,

"HENRY COURTENEY."

CHAPTER XVII.

It was not without a certain dignity and simplicity that Carr avowed the state of his feelings to Mr. Courteney that afternoon. With the tact to perceive that the least possible circumlocution would best suit the taste of his auditor, he came straight to his point at once; merely prefacing it with the frank confession that he had intended speaking first to Miss Courteney, had an opportunity been allowed him for so doing. Mr. Courteney listened gravely, without visible emotion of any kind, even when he learnt the future position and fortune of the man who sought his daughter's hand. He was silent while Carr "hoped that he was not mistaken in believing that Miss Courteney would be inclined to listen favourably to his suit; that he should, of course, wish her decision to be free and unbiassed, if Mr. Courteney gave his consent, and that he should beg to learn that decision from her own lips." Carr went on to say that he should write to his father, as soon as Miss Courteney had consented to become his.

"I will not conceal from you," he added, "that my father is likely to object to my marriage at first; but that will make no difference in my feelings or

conduct. I am five-and-twenty, and am not likely to be overruled in such a matter; and if you are averse to our marriage actually taking *place* under these circumstances, a very few months will induce my father to yield, I am confident."

And here at last Mr. Courteney broke silence.

"Before you go any further, sir, let me remind you of one thing — and I beg you *never* to forget it — bear witness to it hereafter — that neither I nor my family sought your acquaintance, but, on the contrary, avoided it, and that it was thrust upon us by a stratagem, of which I have only become aware within the last few days."

"I do not forget it, nor shall I ever do so, Mr. Courteney," said Carr, colouring to the roots of his hair.

"Nor can you plead at any future time that you were entrapped or inveigled into a marriage with Miss Courteney. You will allow that very little inducement has been held out to you to follow up the acquaintance."

"I am surprised and hurt, Mr. Courteney, that you should conceive it possible for me to hold such an opinion of your family, or even permit such language respecting it ever to be used in my presence."

"If Miss Courteney should accept your offer, then, as you candidly own that your family is likely to be opposed to such a marriage, you must make me one promise: and I require but one. You shall

never forget the circumstances under which you made our acquaintance; you shall never be induced to say that you were *deceived*, that you were not dealt fairly with — that this marriage was made up for you. If you cannot make such a promise, young man, say so at once."

"I make it readily, and I swear to keep it," said Carr, eagerly.

"In that case, having made this preliminary stipulation," pursued Mr. Courteney, with the same imperturbable manner, "let me say that I am better pleased at your frankly acknowledging the view your father is likely to take in this matter *at once*, than had you endeavoured to soften or conceal it."

"But I beg to assure you —" began Carr.

"Stay! young gentleman. Hear me to an end. I wish you distinctly to understand that, even should I find Miss Courteney shares the sentiments you have expressed, I entirely object to a long engagement."

"But, sir —"

Mr. Courteney raised his thin hand.

"I entirely object to a long engagement. But having said this, I must add that, if you have well considered the subject — if you have no doubt or reluctance in your own mind in entering into such a compact against the wishes of your friends —"

"None whatever. I have made up my mind."

"In that case, I shall not regard the objection as insuperable. I shall only stipulate that Lord

Carrlyon shall be informed of your intention. After that, if Miss Courteney is of your mind, the sooner you are married the better."

Carr was surprised. This was hardly the tone for which he had been prepared; but he was, of course, well pleased to find what he had looked on as the chief difficulty in his way removed. After he had expressed his thanks and his satisfaction, Mr. Courteney said —

"I am led to form this opinion and resolution from two considerations. Firstly, that a man is only solemnly responsible to God and his own conscience for the marriage he makes. No one else can judge of the real motives and, it may be, the conflicting struggles that have terminated in the final resolve." (Carr felt keenly how true this was in his own case.) "Secondly, and of far minor importance, is the consideration that Miss Courteney is not unprovided for. She will not be dependent on your family, and I shall exact no settlement upon her beyond her own fortune. During her mother's lifetime — mine, of course, is only an affair of months, more or less — she will have a part of my fortune. She will receive upon the day she marries fifteen thousand pounds, and at Mrs. Courteney's death an additional ten thousand."

There was no denying that in the present state of the Carrlyon money-market, this was not unwelcome intelligence. I have said that Carr did not believe, and would have been really annoyed to

discover, that Gilda was an heiress; but that she had a competency was a feature in the case which would certainly facilitate his negotiations with his father. He hastened, however, to declare that he had believed Miss Courteney to have no fortune; and he requested that the management of it might be left entirely in her hands. Mr. Courteney did not appear to think that this declaration called for any reply; but after a moment's pause, he observed —

"The sand of my life is nearly run out, Mr. Carr. I confess it would make me easier to see this girl married to an honest man whom she loves — whoever he may be — before I die. I am indifferent to all worldly advantages for her — that is the result, I suppose, of having lived so many years *out* of 'the world' — so that your being heir to a title, and so on, is no attraction in my eyes. Indeed, from circumstances into which I see no reason to enter, I consider it almost a drawback." (Could Lady Carrlyon only hear him! Even her son is rather staggered.) "I mention this to prove to you that I shall not endeavour to influence Miss Courteney either for or against you. It rests entirely with her to decide. I carry out the principle I upheld just now with regard to marriage: it must be a free choice, for which she is responsible at a higher bar than *mine*, or the world's."

There was something of solemnity in the way Mr. Courteney uttered these words which deeply

impressed Carr. But the sick man was apparently beginning to feel exhausted, and anxious to bring the interview to a close; for he added, after a few moments —

"To-morrow morning, Mr. Carr, if you call, you shall see her: urge the suit yourself, and receive her answer from her own lips. Meanwhile, she shall be prepared for your coming and its object. You would not wish that she should be surprised into returning a hasty answer; and a little calm deliberation beforehand is worth a long repentance afterwards. Excuse my asking you to remain any longer now. I am tired."

He looked so; and Carr was not sorry to take his extended hand and hurry out of the room. He had felt less at his ease throughout that interview than he ever remembered to have done in all his previous life.

It was not alone the recognition of a powerful by an inferior mind. It was not the hardness with which the truths Mr. Courteney uttered were defined, nor the coldness of his manner, repelling all expansion of heart from the young man. What haunted and painfully impressed him was the conviction that some great sorrow — some livelong remorse had embittered all the fountains of human knowledge, and had frozen up, on heights inaccessible to warmth and sympathy, the wisdom of a disappointed man.

Carr felt that the phrases of society to which he

was accustomed were so much wasted breath to such a man: the arguments he would have brought forward to an ordinary "papa" would be thrown away here; and, moreover, he had a disagreeable impression that Mr. Courteney only half believed in the unalterable strength and depth of his passion. All this weighed upon him, in spite of the remarkable success of his interview. In fact, he felt that he had played a very secondary part in it, and considering the startling "point" — the *coup de theâtre* — that part contained in the announcement of his rank and fortune, this was rather hard. On the other hand, perhaps he produced a more favourable impression on the stern, cynical invalid, than had he shone forth brilliantly in eloquence and profession.

CHAPTER XVIII.

And what of Geraldine all this time? Ever since the conversation three nights ago, in which Sara had contrived, with devilish cunning, to poison the very purest fountain of pleasure which the young girl possessed, she had shrunk with shame from dipping even so much as the tips of her fingers into that now troubled water. She did not dare to see Guido. She felt the blood rush to her cheek at the very possibility of meeting him. A great deal of what had been said might be false, but there was a residue which was true. He avoided her: he was cold and guarded when they met that morning: he was a changed man lately. Her own secret, indeed — that secret which she had not guessed herself till lately, and now tried to disavow — had not been dragged to light; but she was accused of trying to attract — of acting as a heartless coquette towards him! Oh! if it were possible that he thought so! If it were possible even that his *mother* should think and say so! and this she could not but confess was more than possible. She hid her face in her hands, and the burning tears forced their way through them. Yes! Sara's seed had taken root!

She spent the greater part of those days alone.

Of Sara, who asserted her independence by going out at all hours, she saw little. Her mother was principally occupied in attending upon Mr. Courteney. And even to that dear mother whom she loved and trusted so implicitly, it was difficult to speak upon the subject that weighed so heavily at her heart. What, indeed, could she say? How disentangle that woof of mingled feelings, when she scarce saw the threads of them herself?

It was true, as Mrs. Courteney had said to her husband, that she had never noticed to her daughter Laurence's attentions. With rare delicacy she had forborne from questioning her as to her feelings either towards the young Englishman or the Italian. If there was a confidence to be made, it would come unsought, and she would not trouble the freshness and guilelessness of that young nature by suggesting thoughts which might not yet have found their way there. The change in Guido had been only slightly adverted to, as we have seen. At times there may have been a shade across Gilda's brow, but it was scarcely more than a passing one. Until the idea of leaving Bologna had roused the young girl's dormant feelings, there had been little outwardly to indicate their nature. Mrs. Courteney was at a loss to understand why her daughter seemed now to avoid every chance of meeting Laurence Carr, with whom but a few days since she had been on such intimate terms. Her mother could not fail to remark that when Gilda heard the sound of his voice in the

outer *salotto* she fled into her own room. It seemed difficult to believe that Guido was the cause of this change. There was no symptom of such being the case. Yet the depression of the girl's spirits struck her mother painfully. She felt that it was not to be accounted for by the fact of Mr. Courteney's illness; that there was something which lay much deeper below the surface, though she was fairly perplexed — not having the key to Sara's artifices — to know what that was.

And now the moment had arrived when some explanation must follow. In the twilight of Mrs. Courteney's bedroom, on the day of Carr's interview with her husband, as the evening was closing rapidly in, mother and daughter sat together, the girl's head buried in her mother's lap, the mother's hand fondly caressing the soft, golden hair. They had remained thus for a long time, silent, almost motionless, after Mrs. Courteney had announced Laurence Carr's proposal. She begged her daughter to weigh her feelings well; not to return a hasty answer, or let any outward influence affect her.

"It appears," she said, at length, "that this young man is rich, and heir to an ancient title. That would not influence your choice, I know, and your father and I regard it almost as a disadvantage. But we like him; and since your father has spoken to him about you, I think he is especially pleased with his candour and good feeling. If, therefore, dear child, *you* like him, as we think you do —"

"I don't *love* him, mother."

There was a pause.

"The question is whether you have ever seen any one you like better."

The girl turned pale. Even now she shrank from putting into words what was at her heart.

"Yes," she murmured; "but it is of no use talking of that. If Mr. Carr cares for me, he is the only person who does so — in this way. Do you think, mother — tell me truly — do you think I have given him reason to believe I — I — liked him?"

"Certainly, my child, I do think so, or he would not have ventured to propose. But you must not let this influence your decision. If you have unwittingly deceived him, better acknowledge it now than repent later. Anything — *anything* better than that, my darling!"

"I like Mr. Carr *very* much; he's been very kind to me, and I feel very grateful to him for caring about me. No one else does, but you and papa. But, oh! mother, oughtn't a woman to love the man she marries much more than this? — before everything else on earth — as you loved papa when *you* married?"

Mrs. Courteney shuddered.

"A *passionate* love is not always conducive to ultimate happiness. A love founded on esteem, and growing by degrees, offers surer ground, my child."

"Mother, I will tell you something," whispered Gilda, hiding her burning face in her mother's bosom. "Had it not been for a foolish, groundless idea that *some one else* loved me, I might have loved Mr. Carr, perhaps. It was a child's fancy which had grown with my growth, and which I scarcely knew myself till quite — quite lately; and now it is all vanished — all gone!" she sobbed.

The mother stroked her daughter's head lovingly, as it lay on her breast, and said, soothingly —

"If it was but a chimera, my darling, let it vanish. Don't let it come between you and a possible substantial happiness. If this dream is *not* to be realized, it mustn't swallow up your young life."

"I know it is not to be realized, mother. I have awaked — and see now that it was *only* a dream. But is it possible ever quite to forget such dreams, do you think?"

"We change —" began her mother, with a sigh.

"Ah! that is what *he* says," murmured Gilda.

"Yes, we change, and look back to the landscape of our youth with very different eyes: the things that seemed fair in the morning seem very different in the cold mists of evening, my child. Though you do not FORGET, other and more enduring hopes may rise, and take the place of those that are buried."

It was too dark for Gilda to see her mother's face, but the voice told of her strong emotion. The

girl pressed her lips silently on the tremulous hand that enclosed hers.

"My mother will not *urge* me to this," was her silent reflection; "but she and my poor father evidently both wish it: she confesses that anxiety on my account is adding to his irritability and suffering; and I see how agitated she is even in talking of it. I dread seeing papa. What am I to say? What am I to do? Is it right that I should marry Mr. Carr? Papa will say I have been acting heartlessly towards *him* also, as Sara accused me of doing towards Guido! I am very miserable. I wish I knew what was right."

She was but a child in years, after all! Scarcely eighteen, and with absolutely no experience of life. Decision of character is almost always the growth of circumstance. The tenderly-nurtured child had never yet thought or acted for herself. But the time was come when she must do so; and this first trial was a severe one.

Another long silence followed. Mrs. Courteney was no more in perplexity as to the state of her daughter's feelings; and she dreaded to influence her decision by a word. Were the premises on which that decision would be founded false or true? Was Guido really indifferent to her? Had she undoubted ground for believing this? The girl's face was turned towards the window, where the last rays of the winter sunset yet lingered in level bars of yellow behind the *campanile* of a distant church. Thus she

sat on a low stool at her mother's feet, and watched the stripes of twilight cloud broaden across the sky, silent, abstracted, sad: feeling no comfort but in the tender stroke of that tremulous hand laid upon her head ever and anon.

Mr. Courteney's hand-bell rang from the adjoining room. The mother started up and hurried in. She was absent a few minutes, and on her return she said —

"Your father wished to speak to you himself. I thought you would prefer doing so to-morrow morning. Go now into your room, dear child, and lie down until tea-time. You look pale and tired; and I shall be busy for an hour."

Then it was, so soon as her daughter had left the room, that Mrs. Courteney acted upon one of these suddenly-formed resolutions (her husband would have called them impulses) which were now rare with her, though once so essentially characteristic of her tender and enthusiastic nature. Her child's happiness was at stake. It was no moment for the cautious hesitations which she had learnt, alas! in her school of trouble ought to be the necessary preliminaries to every course of action. She hastily wrote a few words in pencil, and ringing the bell, desired that they might be taken at once to Count Lamberti. A few minutes later Mrs. Courteney's ear caught the well-known sound of that firm step in the ante-room. The door opened, and Guido

entered. The servant placed a lamp upon the table and retired.

"Sit down, Guido, if you have a few minutes to spare to me. I have much to say to you, to consult you upon."

He shook hands with Mrs. Courteney and sat down.

"We have known you now a long time," she continued; "and though we see less of you than we did, my husband's regard and mine is the same for you as ever. We feel to you, indeed, more like a son, and are confident that in any matter vital to the happiness of all of us you would assist us with your best counsel as a son and a brother, Guido."

He bowed, and she went on —

"The subject I would speak to you about is this Englishman, Mr. Laurence Carr. You know him. Tell me candidly your opinion of him. As a young man, you have opportunities of judging which an invalid and an old woman cannot have."

"My intercourse with Signor Carr has been but slight," replied Guido, constrainedly.

"Owing to yourself?"

"Owing to myself, perhaps."

"There is, then, I infer, but little sympathy between you?"

"I think not. But do not misunderstand me, signora. Let this be no disparagement to Signor Carr. I know nothing against him."

"You have positively no reason for this aversion?"

"It is difficult, perhaps, always to account for one's likings, or the reverse," he returned, coldly.

"Then, you have no reasonable ground for the prejudice existing in your mind?"

"If you insist on calling it by so hard a name — none."

"Have you any idea why I ask you these questions, Guido?"

He waited for a moment, and then replied —

"I guess the reason."

"I shall probably not live very long, Guido. In the space of five-and-forty years I have lived a long, long life-time! and you know the state of Mr. Courteney's health. He is anxious to see our child married to some upright, honourable man who loves her, feeling how precarious both our lives are. There was a moment — I may say this now, Guido — when he thought this man might have been yourself."

She paused so as to allow him to speak, if he felt so minded. He was silent. His back being turned towards the lamp on the table, it was impossible to distinguish his features.

"But the idea," she continued, "soon passed away, and he saw that your feeling towards our dear child was only that of a brother; while we felt that your mother would probably offer many objections to your marrying a heretic. Is it so?"

"Let it suffice, signora," he replied, at last, in a low, hoarse voice, "that I can never marry in my

present condition. I have sworn it — never to drag down my wife to penury, nor to be dependent on her. Let this suffice. I entreat you, make no further reference to myself; my feelings or my mother's are beside the question. Tell me only in what way I can serve you and yours — my life, signora, would be willingly laid down in such service."

"Bear with me a few moments," said Mrs. Courteney, quietly. "After my own child's happiness, Guido, there is none I desire more fervently than yours. You know that, though not rich, she will have a competency. If, as I think I perceive in your words, there *is* a deeper feeling in your heart than you permit yourself to express openly, do not — oh! do not, Guido, let the happiness of perhaps *two* people be sacrificed to a false pride! What is money and every other worldly advantage compared to this? Do you really prize them so highly as to think they weigh down the balance against a true love? Alas! you have not seen as much of life as I have, or you would judge differently! Tell me, Guido, that I am mistaken as to your feelings; or revoke that vow, which can never have been registered in Heaven!"

Guido seized her hand and raised it to his lips. She felt that he trembled, and it seemed to her that a scalding tear fell on her hand as he bent over it. There was, indeed, all the agony of a lifetime concentrated for him in those few minutes! But though

his voice shook when he spoke, there was no faltering of resolution in the words.

"I entreat you, signora, say no more. Believe me that vow *is* registered beyond recall. I will confess to you that, had not my pride — the pride of a Lamberti — prompted it, my mother and the priests would probably have driven me to it, for I could not subject my wife to their persecution. It is my destiny, signora; it can never be otherwise. But be consoled; I am the only sufferer! Never has a word passed my lips to cloud the future happiness of your child. Need I ask you, signora, never to allow a word to cross *yours* of the secret you have guessed? It will go down with me to the grave unspoken."

Mrs. Courteney sighed heavily.

"If that is your last and unalterable determination, I have nothing further to say. I know you will understand my real motives for saying so much. Had *you* been willing to forget your poverty, Mr. Courteney would not have been the one to remind you of it; but neither to him nor to any one else, I promise you, shall a word on this subject be breathed by me. We will try and forget that it was broached, while my regard for you, Guido, remains unaltered. As to Mr. Carr," she continued, after a pause, "I must rest satisfied, I suppose, with your assurance that you know nothing against him — nothing that should make us hesitate to receive him as a son-in-law, should our child consent to marry him?"

"Nothing, if she consents," he added, with emphasis.

Mrs. Courteney's countenance showed signs of some strong internal agitation before she next spoke: and it was then in more slow and measured phrase.

"I have now, then, one last request to make of you. You tell me that no word has ever passed your lips to cloud the happiness of our child. You must not do so even by your *presence* when she is married. This sounds hard, but it is wise for both of you. Whatever her lot is — whether she accepts Mr. Carr or another — so soon as that lot is irrevocably fixed, it is better that you should not meet. Married life is not always thornless; and the less sympathy a woman has the better! The fancies of a child may revive with dangerous force when a woman is unhappy." She sighed heavily, and added, "Promise me this."

"I do."

She held out her hand, and Guido raised it once more to his lips.

So their interview ended: — she back to solitary reflection, and doubt, and prayer, in her own room: he striding down the stairs, and out into the black night, which had now closed over the city, pacing the arcaded streets hour after hour, and feeling in his heart like the shipwrecked when the last cable has parted — the last hope of life is drifted out of reach.

CHAPTER XIX.

BEFORE daybreak next morning the wife was in her husband's room. He was already up and writing letters.

"This is to Monsieur Tourville, my lawyer and the girl's trustee. Let it be despatched by this morning's post to Paris — if she consents. There is no time to be lost. I feel stronger just now, but this strength is fictitious, and, with the necessity for exertion, will pass away. I want to have the matter off my mind. Have you seen the child?"

"No; it is not yet seven o'clock."

"Send her to me when she is up."

"There is one thing, Henry," said the wife, in a low voice, after a pause — "there is one thing you are no doubt prepared to do."

"What is that?"

"If Gilda consents to marry Mr. Carr, you have made up your mind to tell him everything?"

"By no means. I see no good to be gained by such a course to either of them. They will both be happier without such knowledge, which need never reach them."

"But, oh, Henry! if it *does* reach him hereafter, and through another channel! Think of the re-

proaches to which you subject yourself! Think of his family — of —"

"I have thought of all you suggest," said the invalid, drily, "and I see no cause to alter my resolution formed long ago. Whoever marries my child marries the daughter of an obscure Englishman living abroad, who shuns society — who has repelled, rather than met, the advances of any suitor for his child. In short, that man will marry her for *herself* alone, and on his own responsibility. I do not conceive myself the least obliged to render up to him an account of my past life; and as I believe that such knowledge would be injurious to *her* (from my experience of the way in which this righteous world visits the sins of the fathers on the children), I shall take the liberty of acting according to my own judgment in the matter. Against the consequences of any accidental discovery hereafter I have guarded, by fully impressing on this young man the fact just alluded to — that *he* has sought *us* out, and received no encouragement in so doing. But such accidental discovery is most improbable. The half of my fortune will be paid over to Gilda's husband on her marriage day, and the remaining half — with the exception of a legacy — at your death, all being now in the French funds in my present name. During the short time I remain here he will not be troubled by hearing much of *me;* and I have already pointed out to you the necessity of following the same line of conduct when I am gone."

"Henry! you don't mean the child and I must be entirely separated?"

"Virtually so. This has no doubt entered into a prudent man's calculations. He sees we are not forward, pushing people." The thin, sarcastic smile died away. "Seriously, you are not foolish enough to contemplate the possibility of returning to England — of venturing to Carrlyon, even when your daughter is installed there as mistress? You have not lived this life for twenty years to expose yourself to insult and obloquy at the close of it, have you?"

The patient woman bowed her head; but the tears gathered in her eyes.

"You are right — I feel you are right. Whoever she marries, we must be divided, alas! But, oh! Courteney, even thus, is it not better to let Mr. Carr know all? Don't let him be able to reproach you hereafter with having kept the secret from him — with having deceived him!"

"The secret is ours. No one has a right to demand us to unbury our past. There is no deception, for there is nothing in the *child's* past to conceal, and that is all that affects her husband, or that he has a right to know. My mind is made up. Say no more about it."

The father's interview with his daughter was short enough, and characteristic.

"You know that I *can't* live long, and that your mother's health is precarious. It is natural, there-

fore, that we should be anxious to see you married. God forbid that I should *urge* you to marry any one, but here is a man you seem to like, and who — as far as one can judge of anybody in this world of shams — appears honest and honourable; likely to make you a kind husband, in short. Don't be romantic — don't be disappointed if you're not passionately in love; I've lived long enough to know that that sort of thing don't last. But some less fine-sounding things *do*. Use your judgment as to what you have seen of this Laurence Carr — and you've had a fair opportunity in this last month — to decide for yourself whether you can be contented to pass your life with him."

"My mind is made up, father," said the soft, young voice.

Mr. Courteney waited a minute. "Well?"

"I will give my answer, if you please; to Mr. Carr himself. He shall decide for me."

It was a hopelessly wet day, as one actor in that small drama will probably remember all his life. The rain spouted in two continuous courses from the gurgoyles on the roof into the *cortile* below. A gutter of liquid black mud poured vehemently down the centre of the street, where, except a priest, or a soldier, or some miserable figure of dire necessity making his way across the desert piazze against the driving rain, no one ventured beyond the limits of his own length of arcade. The tall Englishman, in his dripping macintosh, striding along to the Casa

Lamberti, was therefore additionally conspicuous. Padre Stefano, as he lifted the leathern curtain of San Petronio, and hurried in to morning mass, noted that figure across the piazza, and smiled. He probably knew as much as we do of the errand on which Carr was bound. The marchesa, *en papillotes* and *robe de chambre*, beheld him from an upper window as she stirred her chocolate, and guessed whither he was going. The knot of idle young *nobili* over their billiards and dominoes at the club laughed and shrugged their shoulders, ejaculating, "*E proprio innamorato, quello!*" — for gossip in Italian towns is even more swift and searching than elsewhere. The professor looked up from the *Purgatorio* and sighed as Carr passed his window with a cheerful nod. He, too, guessed the young man's errand that dismal morning, and muttered to himself — "Well, well, it is better, perhaps. So will my Guido's thoughts now be devoted entirely to a mistress who cannot be robbed from him — Italy! *Povero giovane!* His heart will consume its fire inwardly for awhile, till, like Enceladus, it burst forth with redoubled strength, in a new direction."

The old Italian took a grave pinch of snuff, and for a few moments forgot the text before him in a patriotic dream of the future.

Last of all, Sara, with her face pressed against the window, watched for Carr's coming from the *salotto*, and slipped out into the ante-room as soon as she saw him enter the courtyard.

"One word of counsel from a friend," she whispered, hurriedly, as he unfastened his dripping overcoat. "Be bold and persevere. Show yourself as earnest and ardent, and, above all, as thoroughly *convinced*, undoubting, of her love. Attach no importance to anything she may confide to you of her scruples or her hesitation. It is part of her romantic disposition — dear child! — to dwell morbidly on such things. Do not let them affect you, Mr. Carr," she laughed; and, looking round, whispered still lower, "It is far from her intention that they should do so."

She glided away, leaving Carr somewhat bewildered and perplexed as to the precise sense he was to attach to her words. But there was no time to ponder them more deliberately. His hand was on the drawing-room door. He opened it, and found himself alone with Gilda.

She was standing in the centre of the room, against the back of her chair, her hands tightly pressed together. Her face was very pale; otherwise there was no indication of all she had suffered, and of the struggle she was still undergoing. Carr took the hand she held out to him between both his.

"Dearest Gilda! May I be allowed to call you so? Is the answer I am here to receive from you a favourable one to my hopes? Say but that one word, dearest, and put me out of my painful suspense."

"Mr. Carr, I have something to explain — some-

thing to say first, if you will listen to it. I am young, and have no experience of the world. Forgive me, if I say anything I ought not. Are you sure you are not mistaken in fancying that you love me? It never entered my thoughts that you were in earnest. You amused yourself, and I did the same. Anything so deep and solemn as love for life, perhaps, I did you the injustice to believe you could not feel. If my manner has led you to think otherwise, Mr. Carr, I entreat your forgiveness. If your love is, indeed, real, and not a mere passing fancy, I am very grateful, but most unworthy of it."

Carr dropped the little hand, and a shade crossed his brow. His tone was sharp and cold.

"Have you been trifling with me all this time, then, Miss Courteney? I think I have deserved better at your hands than to be told you didn't believe me capable of a strong attachment."

"You misunderstand me, Mr. Carr. I like you; and nothing was ever further from my thoughts than to trifle with your feelings. True, I did not think you were in earnest: I thought it was the way among men of the world, leading the life you have been accustomed to, to say more than they mean. Still, I *might* have attached more importance to all your kindness towards me: might have loved you but for another reason — something — something," she went on, hurriedly, "which it is so painful to me to mention, that I only do so because I consider

you have a right to know it. I have allowed myself foolishly — unconsciously — to regard another in the light of — in short, as you wish me to regard *you*. It was a child's dream that grew up unknown to myself — unshared — unguessed by that other. I have awaked from it. But you understand now why I can't meet your love as it deserves."

Carr bit his lip. His pride was stung; and he would probably have accepted the refusal contained in her reply at once; but Sara's words flashed across him. He paused for a minute, and said, with a smile —

"You regard this fancy of your childhood from too romantic a point of view. Your dream, you say, is fled. A reality is before you — a reality, I believe, of substantial happiness, if you will accept it. I am undaunted by what you tell me. Do not disappoint the hopes you have led me to cherish. I love you, Gilda. My love has over-stepped every obstacle. You have encouraged this love — cruelly encouraged, if all you now do is to throw on it the ice of your contempt!"

"Not contempt, oh! not contempt, Mr. Carr. I could feel regard and friendship for you: but, ah! this is a poor return for the love you offer me."

"I am content to accept it. It will grow into the love you dream of day by day, Gilda."

She sank down into the chair beside her, and leant her head upon the table. Poor child! She knew not how to resist any more: she felt be-

wildered: what was she to say? She had hoped — she had believed that by a simple statement of the truth Carr's feelings would have prompted him to withdraw. And now, if it was true that she had led him to conceive that she encouraged his passion — as every one thought, and as Carr averred — if he was satisfied with that cold feeling, which was all she had to give, what opposition could she continue to make?

"Remember it is *your* doing," she murmured. "I have told you all — do not reproach me afterwards. I will try and be a faithful wife to you, if you wish it. I cannot promise more."

He was upon his knees before her. She allowed him to draw her towards him. She felt his burning lips pressed upon her cheek. She knew that he spoke, but the words she could not understand. Her brain was reeling round and round. A deadness seemed creeping over her limbs. She made an effort to rise — to shake it off — and fell forwards senseless in his arms.

CHAPTER XX.

The moon, unobscured by blind or shutter, shone full into the room the two girls occupied. It was long past midnight: the tapers were extinguished; the fire on the hearth had died out; the ghostly moon alone filled the room with its light, touching the faded forms upon the arras, and defining the cumbrous furniture in masses of solid shade upon the rough floor.

One occupant of that chamber had been asleep for the last hour. The over-worn young heart was locked in oblivion for awhile, and, after several sleepless nights, had dropped into a heavy slumber. Upon the bed opposite, a ray of moonlight fell on a slight figure sitting erect, its arms folded, its face shrouded by the masses of black hair which, escaping from the net, had fallen about the shoulders — assuredly not asleep, yet motionless as stone.

What is in the woman's heart, as she sits upright there in the blue moonlight? What dark and tangled web of thought is her busy brain weaving in the dead of night? The secrets of a young heart already depraved are a foul subject to lay bare for contemplation. The unworthy hopes and fears, the vindictive hates, the unscrupulous stratagems that

stop short at no means to compass their end, must be dissected without shrinking, though it may be that in so doing the surgeon's knife miss the more delicate fibres that overspread in a net-work the human heart. That strong nature for good or evil, like some rich land in which the weeds grow rankest and poisonous reptiles abound, had springs of passionate love and tenderness, capacities of bearing abundant blossom of constancy and endurance, which, for want of control and cultivation, so to speak, ran riot through the land, and left it a noxious swamp. From her Creole mother, whom she had lost as a child, and whose memory she still cherished in a wild, vindictive way, swearing sooner or later to avenge the wrongs that mother had suffered — from her, the dark hot blood and sensual development; the sinuous grace, and with it the nature of the serpent. From her English father, probably, the secretiveness, the hard, indomitable tenacity of purpose, the mental grasp, and ability to cope with adverse circumstances instead of succumbing to them. No ordinary woman this, into which two natures were so dangerously welded. She will spare none: she will yield to none. Her paths are tortuous: if one be blocked up she will try another; but you may be sure no worm will stop her: she will tread it relentlessly under foot, and pass on.

Two subjects hold divided empire in her mind to-night, as they have long done. To these ruling thoughts has every word, every action of her life for

some time past been subservient. They may be said to belong to the two sides of her nature: the one warm and human, springing from the passionate heart, and sending its fire through the senses: the other, cold and calculating, though no less intense, born of the head and nourished by the circumstances surrounding her. The one is a love, unrequited, yet hoping, daring, and scheming, in spite of all discouragement. The other, that resolute determination to rise from her dependent position and to acquire *power* — no matter by what means — which, from her childhood upwards, has been ever present to her mind. When neglected and starving, when flattered and fondled, when finding herself suddenly thrown aside as a broken plaything, or treated with the care and tenderness of a daughter by her present protectors, that one idea has been ever predominant — never turned aside nor softened by any outward change. Power! Now, the idea was more or less connected with *him*. How to acquire an ascendancy over, and render herself necessary to him; how to raise herself into such a position as to make him recognise her abilities, and feel that such a woman was the true helpmate for him in those political struggles which were looming for him in the future. So far her schemes had prospered. She had effectually swept her rival from the path. In other directions, as will be seen by-and-by, she had played her part with consummate skill. But by far the most difficult portion of her task was yet to be done —

so difficult, that to most women it would have seemed hopeless. The idea now predominant in her mind was that by *knowledge* only — knowledge of all the secrets underlying the lives with whom her life was now connected, could she obtain influence, importance — *power*.

A suggestion which her unscrupulousness, her training in dark and crooked ways, had constantly prompted lately, returned to-night with redoubled force. That desk, for which Mrs. Courteney evinced such jealous concern, must contain the clue to some secret of vital importance to herself, her husband, or her child. The possession of this secret might prove of immense value to the furtherance of Sara's plans. It might furnish her with the hold she felt she would require, sooner or later, upon Mr. or Mrs. Courteney; and no stone was to be left unturned which might help to make her mistress of her position. But the turning of this particular stone was no easy thing. It was fraught, as she knew, with difficulty and danger. She hesitated: from no compunctions of conscience, but because the risk was great, and she balanced the probability of the secret being worth to her the chances of detection. The burning curiosity, the restless excitement of the woman's nature, leading her to prefer any peril to inaction, prevailed in the end, as might be foreseen.

She glided out of bed, and threw her white wrapper around her. It was characteristic of the woman, that as she passed the mirror, she stood for

a moment or two with folded arms, and looked at her own image reflected there in the cold blue moonlight. Then, stealing to the bedside where Gilda slept, she drew back the curtain, and gazed at her innocent rival with an amount of concentrated hatred in her glance which almost seemed to make itself felt by the sleeper. She moaned and turned uneasily towards the wall, and Sara, starting back, dropped the curtain and held her breath until the sleeper's respiration, rising and falling once more at regular intervals upon the silence of the night, told her that there was nothing to fear in that quarter. She crept, with her unshod feet, along the rough boards till she reached the door, drew back the bolt with a cautious hand, stopped, listened, and then pulled the door swiftly open. It had an ugly habit of creaking; and, in spite of her dexterity, it now gave out one short, sharp sound, like a cry, which she believed must inevitably wake Gilda. She was prepared for the emergency, but her presence of mind was not called for. The young girl had apparently fallen into a yet deeper sleep, impervious to all ordinary sounds. Sara glided out.

Across the ante-chamber, past the servants' rooms, that dim white figure crept noiselessly along. In the sala, where the heavy curtains were drawn, excluding the moonlight which had lighted her hitherto, the real danger and difficulty commenced. Mrs. Courteney's door was a-jar, as was indicated by the shaft of faint light from the lamp she always burnt

by the bedside. A false step here, a stumble against one of the heavy chairs or tables, would betray Sara inevitably. She stretched out her soft, velvet hands, and felt her way along to that narrow stream of light at the door.

Having reached this in safety, she crouched down and listened. Not a sound. She knew this door did not creak; she ventured to push it open a few more inches. But she also knew that Mrs. Courteney was a very light sleeper. Even now she might be awake. The utmost caution must be used: and the girl stopped again and held her breath and listened, but in vain.

The chief difficulty was to get possession of the key of the desk. Sara had ascertained that Mrs. Courteney was accustomed to lay it with her watch and rings on the table by her bed. Sara could almost see it glimmering under the lamp from where she stood — but to reach it without betraying herself, seemed impossible.

At the end of five minutes she had satisfied herself that the inmate of that room must actually be asleep. The deep shadow cast by the half-drawn curtain over the bed prevented her distinguishing the sleeper's figure; but no one who was awake, Sara felt sure, could remain so perfectly motionless.

The Creole girl then suddenly bethought herself of a practice not uncommon in the land of her birth whereby at least one danger might be obviated. The shallow, dim-burning lamp was so placed as to light

only the upper portion of the walls, and leave the floor in shade.

Slipping off the white wrapper, so as to obviate the rustle of unnecessary drapery, she lay down almost at full length and crawled snake-wise, inch by inch, along the floor, and up to the bed; pausing, if so much as one of her nails scraped the board, and lying still; then creeping on, with an oily suppleness of limb unknown to Europeans, until she reached the table, and touched the valance of the bed.

She stopped again for a moment, raised herself on her elbows, and looked behind the curtain. The bed was empty.

Sara was almost more startled than relieved for a few seconds. Then springing to her feet, she stepped softly to the door of Mr. Courteney's room and listened.

She heard the sick gentleman restlessly turning in bed: and then came a low sob, which she recognized as Mrs. Courteney's.

"This thing is preying on your mind, Henry," said the wife's broken voice. "For God's sake, tell him all, and ease your conscience of this terrible weight. Think of the awful responsibility! Even if he break off this marriage, the child's feelings are not so deeply engaged that —"

"Enough — hold your peace, Mary. The child has decided, and *I* have decided. The blood is on *our* heads — yours and mine. I will never yield

assent to that hideous creed that it is to be transmitted to our child, though the world decree it so."

Should she hear any more? The wife was about to reply, but time was precious. There stood the box, and there lay the key. Knowledge more certain, more complete than by eaves-dropping, could thus be obtained. There was the risk of discovery, but that risk must be run. She took the key, swept up the desk in her arms, and in another moment had glided out; then reaching her own room in safety, flung her precious burden on the bed.

She struck a light. Gilda still slept soundly as a child, and Sara began her work of examination untroubled by a fear.

Yet scarcely had she opened the desk when the superscription on a letter met her eye, and a sharp, irrepressible cry of surprise escaped her. With trembling hands she tore open the letter; she brushed the hair back from her distended eyes and drank in the contents, and not till then drew a long, deep breath, as after an invigorating draught. She sprang to her feet with a smile of devilish exultation, and raising her arms to their full extent above her head, twisted her fingers sportively together; but the next moment these feverish fingers were busy at work again tearing open packet after packet. And here a dried geranium leaf, and here a curl of hair fell under that desecrating touch, and were scoffingly thrust back into the covers whence they came. Some copies of verses in very faded ink; a register of

birth and marriage; and last of all, at the bottom of the desk, a thick cover, whereon was written, "To be burned, with all these papers, after my death." She tore it open. A lock of a man's light brown hair, thickly clotted with blood, fell out, and under it the miniature of him, no doubt, to whom that hair once belonged. A young and handsome man, joyous and full of life, but with a weak, almost effeminate expression of mouth which the flattering brush of the limner could not conceal. She held it up to the candle, and fastened her tigerish gaze upon the features; then thrust it hurriedly back into the cover, locked the desk, and glided back as she came. The search had not occupied more than twenty minutes; and Mrs. Courteney's room was still empty. Sara placed both desk and key carefully in their places, and crept again to her room undiscovered.

But not to sleep that night: — to lay her foundations in the future anew; to consolidate the old jealousies with new hate; to undermine with fresh vigour from fresh stores of power, and to reconstruct with redoubled energy and skill.

CHAPTER XXI.

The unhappy old devotee sat with the *scaldino* upon her knees, and the Jesuit before her. The expression on her countenance was made up of terror, perplexity, and above all, the most abject abasement. In the oily tongue of her confessor was all the law and the prophets. She could no more struggle successfully against it, than the doomed bird under the fascination of a serpent.

"*Si é fatta Cristiana?*" she inquired; the conversion to Romanism being only more laconically expressed, by the "making herself a Christian" to narrow-minded bigotry, even in the countess's station.

"*Davero*," replied the priest. "But this has not been accomplished without some difficulty and the promise of procuring her a good *partito*. Your son she inclines to most of all; and as I think she will exercise an advantageous influence over him, you must exert yourself, contessa, to bring about this result."

"But he loves the other one, padre; and you know how obstinate he is, poor boy!"

"The other has thrown him over for the Englishman, and the count may be brought to marry this

girl, through pique. She is clever and may work us much good; and I tell you that it is *essential* to separate your son at once from his dangerous companions; and attach him to some sharp-witted woman, who will obtain a righteous ascendancy over him."

"But — but," stammered the poor lady, ashamed of naming so sordid a consideration to the spiritually-minded father, "is she not very poor? a dependant on this Courteney family?"

"She engages — how and whence I know not — to procure some fifty or sixty thousand scudi for her marriage portion."

"It is very strange, is it not?"

"We have nothing to say to the strangeness of it," remarked the priest, somewhat sharply. "She undertakes that it shall be forthcoming before the negotiations are concluded. And you know that it would be difficult to obtain as much with any *partito* here, in the present state of the count's fortunes — unless, indeed, you sought for an alliance among the *mezzo ceto*."

"No," replied the countess with a sigh. "His father was a proud man, and so is Guido. The Lambertis were counts in the Marches in the fourteenth century. They have never degraded themselves to a mere mercenary marriage. But what do you know of this girl's birth, padre? She may belong to the *mezzo ceto* herself?"

This momentary glimmer of reason was quickly put out by a severe look from Padre Stefano.

"Do you imagine I have not inquired, my daughter? Confine your excellent observation to matters you can understand. I have seen the register of this young lady's birth, and letters written by her illustrious papa, whose family is one of the oldest in England. You may rest satisfied on this head."

"Indeed, padre," said the poor lady, submissively, after a moment's pause, "I fear I shall not succeed in persuading my son to listen to reason; but of course I will obey you. Anything to serve the interests of our holy Church, and to promote the spiritual welfare of my Guido."

"You must work upon his feelings; and as I have already said, pique may do somewhat. But you have no time to lose. I learn this evening there is a change in the plans of the Courteney family again. They depart in a few days."

"The blessed Virgin be praised for that!" ejaculated Madame Lamberti, fervently. "I have had no rest since they have been here, and shall have none as long as they remain. They have paid their rent up for the next three months, so I have no disquietude on that score, but oh! I feel as if my Guido were never safe as long as that other girl was here! She has exercised some unholy spell over him. He neither eats nor sleeps. I hear

him walking up and down the room half the night, father."

"Marriage will cure all that," replied the priest, smiling.

"May he not return to be as he was before they came, — when they depart?" said the poor mother.

"I repeat, it is necessary that we obtain a hold over him *now or never*, and it rests chiefly with you to accomplish this."

The above is but a fragment of a long conversation which passed between the priest and his victim about a week after Carr's proposal, and two days after Sara's nocturnal wanderings. Her interviews with Padre Stefano, which had been pretty frequent before then, had even been longer and more frequent since. And while the old woman was as a puppet in the hands of the priest, he, astute man as he was, was but a puppet in the hands of the girl.

The marriage could not take place at Bologna. Florence was the nearest place where there was a clergyman; and a favourable change in the weather produced so corresponding a one in Mr. Courteney's health, that he declared himself equal to undertake the journey. He seemed to have rallied, indeed, ever since the marriage was decided on; and though the physician looked grave and shook his head, he could not positively interdict the journey by short stages. It was agreed that Carr, who was as impatient of delays as Mr. Courteney seemed, should

go on to arrange certain necessary preliminaries, and that the Courteneys should follow three days later. Mrs. Courteney alone opposed all haste, and would have temporized if she could: spoke of the impossibility of her daughter's wedding garments being made in this haste; and suggested that there should be at least a month's interval before the marriage. But Carr's characteristic impetuosity was seconded in this instance by Mr. Courteney's evident anxiety that the matter should be concluded.

"In my state any unnecessary delay is dangerous. I am well enough to move just now. I may not be so a fortnight hence; and in a month's time I may be gone on a longer journey, who knows? The settlement is so simple a matter, that we may expect it from Paris in a few days. What then is there to detain us?"

Gilda made no objection. She was quiet, pale, and passive. Far from avoiding Carr now, she met him with her gentle smile, and listened to all his rapturous nonsense, and seemed to feel that in plighting her word she had relinquished all further right to act for herself, and must, perforce, lean upon and cling to the support she had chosen. His tact was never more gracefully and adroitly employed than in speaking to her of the happy future they would lead at Carrlyon. Almost the first time they had met, she had expressed an eager desire to become acquainted with English country life. She would see it now, he told her, under auspices which he

hoped would make her love it, and prevent her casting a regret back to Italy . . . and he described the old house, with its picture-gallery, and banqueting-hall, and sunny terraces, and herds of fallow deer swimming across the lake to be fed on summer mornings, and the rides down forest glades, and the village, with its schools and its ivied church, and the Christmas bounty — which should be called "Geraldine's bounty," when *she* was Lady of the Manor, — and the loving tenantry, and the children's feasts, and — and — in short, like portraits of Queen Bess, his brilliant picture of the golden time that was to succeed their marriage, had no shadows. Yet shadows there were, only he ignored them. His father's sturdy figure pointing to his diminished rent-roll; his mother's implacable face of spite, and wrath, and disappointment; he saw them both, but he resolved they should not interfere with the happiness of that prospect. Had not his life been passed in twisting them both round his fingers? When the thing was *done* — accomplished beyond recall — they would submit to make the best of it: though he well knew what obstacles would be thrown in his way to *prevent* it, if possible. Therefore, he was anxious that the marriage should take place before any letters or messenger, in reply to his announcement, could reach Italy. In that announcement of his engagement, he said nothing of its immediate fulfilment; with reference to the sale of the farm, he contented himself, on second thoughts, by expressing

the assurance that he should always be happy to consent to anything tending to make his father comfortable; and he felt certain that Lord Carrlyon, on *his* part, would never refuse his consent to a step upon which the happiness of his son depended. To his mother I am afraid he assumed a sharper and more decided tone, as better calculated in his estimation to produce the desired effect. He reminded her that he had never given her the smallest reason to believe he should marry to please any one but himself. He *had* pleased himself. He was prepared for all she could say, and he begged beforehand to assure her it would not have the least weight with him. His mind was fully made up, and his word pledged. The wife he had chosen was one whom Lady Carrlyon ought to be proud to receive as a daughter-in-law. She was rich in every mental and personal grace, which he had lived long enough to consider superior to all other riches. In conclusion, he had the effrontery to hope that his mother would send his bride-elect some small trinket, from the great family jewel-case, as an earnest of her ladyship's affectionate regard.

He was more in love than ever: forgot himself, his little vanities and small social triumphs, the selfishness of the spoilt child, the arrogance of the admired and successful man; forgot everything but her: and the love which began as a pastime, now influenced every thought and action. Perhaps the combativeness of his nature, which I have already

shown was so prominent a feature, added to the ardour of his passion for the time. He swore that the earnestness of his devotion should gradually melt her coldness. He would overcome and drive out that old memory; he never doubted it. And, in truth, this energy of purpose, the ennobling influence of one healthy feeling, strong and true, in a petty life of *dilettanteism*, made itself felt; the outlines of the man seemed broader and bolder than they had hitherto. Gilda was not insensible to this; what woman could be so? She said she had done him injustice: she tried to repair it by every means in her power. The week that had elapsed was one of probation to her: it was an effort always to appear cheerful, to drive back the thought that *would* rise unbidden at times, and to enter — or seem to enter — into all Carr's plans with interest. When she failed, she reproached herself: for was he not more tender and more forbearing than she had believed possible?

One trial was spared her. Guido she never saw. Since that interview with Mrs. Courteney he had not been inside the apartment. She did not hear his name mentioned. By tacit consent, neither her mother nor herself had alluded to him since *that* day: Gilda, indeed, was ignorant that her mother had seen him. No good was to be gained by repeating to her the substance of that interview. The best, the only thing, that her mother could hope, was that the memory of this early love, which the girl at least had no idea was returned, might die

out and be forgotten in these two young lives. Mrs. Courteney's partiality for Carr made her, perhaps, more sanguine that the redemption of her child's happiness lay in his devotion.

Such was the state of feeling, and the position of affairs, in the family on the day when it had been finally resolved that Carr should proceed by diligence the following morning to Florence, engage an apartment for the Courteneys, and make the necessary arrangements for the marriage forthwith. He had already written to the Secretary of Legation, who was a friend of his, begging him to facilitate matters; and it was agreed between Mr. Courteney and himself that the ceremony should take place, if possible, four or five days after their arrival in Florence.

That evening, as they sat round the tea-table, Garofalo, who had not been to see his friends for some days, unexpectedly made his appearance at the door. The worthy professor looked rather pale and anxious, as though some matter of more than common gravity weighed upon his mind.

Mr. Courteney, who was stretched in his *chaise longue* near the fire, with his pocket-volume of Horace between his finger and thumb, greeted his old friend with unusual warmth.

"How fares it with our learned professor? I have been here, on this sofa, for the last two days, expecting you to come and see me."

"Hè! signore," responded the Italian, grasping

the invalid gentleman's thin hand, "I have had business of importance occupying me. *Chè vuole?* I am glad to see you better. You, too, caro signore, have been occupied, I believe? Is it too late to offer my felicitations?"

"Very nearly; for in less than a week we shall be gone."

"I regret it much, signore. This house will indeed seem deserted without you: but who can tell how long any of us will remain here? Guido himself is off to-morrow."

"Guido!" exclaimed Mrs. Courteney, aloud. The attention of every one of the party was fixed upon the professor, otherwise the extraordinary convulsion of Sara's face could hardly have escaped notice. The cup of tea she was carrying to her lips shook so that she was obliged to set it down.

"By-the-by, that reminds me," said Mr. Courteney, "that we have not seen Count Lamberti, either, for some days. What is the cause of this sudden departure?"

The professor laid his forefinger on the side of his nose.

"*Private affairs*, which call him to the north of Italy for a short time, signore."

Carr involuntarily fixed his eyes upon Gilda while the above was passing. She turned a shade paler, and a low sigh — so low indeed that it scarcely reached him — escaped her after the professor's last speech. An awkward silence followed.

Each member of that small party felt it, and knew the reason; that is to say, his own reason: and for some minutes there was nothing heard but the noise of the professor's copious pinch of snuff, the taking of which was always attended by a sound like that of a terrier worrying a rat.

"You must come and visit us at Florence, Garofalo," said Mr. Courteney at last, "the *città superba* of your favourite poet must have some attraction for you."

"Ah! it is as ungrateful to me as it was to the divine Dante," replied the professor, shaking his head. "A Florentine, I am exiled from her walls, signore; and if we meet again, it must be elsewhere — for the present. But," he added in a livelier tone, though with equal earnestness, "congratulate me, signore! What think you? I have made the acquaintance of two *such* men since I had last the honour of seeing you! Italians — true gentlemen, true scholars, and both of them full of the most interesting details for me."

"Who are these uncommonly rare birds?" asked Mr. Courteney, sarcastically.

"One is called Jacoppo Rossi, a Venetian; the other, Giovanni Tibaldi. His country I cannot find out; such an entertaining companion! and full of instruction."

"Where did you make the acquaintance of these gentlemen, Garofalo? I never heard you

speak before in such terms of any of your townsfolk."

"Ah! caro signore. These were forwarded to me from Venice, by a friend. They are not to be found here."

"Forwarded? not to be found? What do you mean? Where are they living?"

"Living! They have been dead, caro signore, between three and four hundred years. These are their MS. letters, despatches, and journals, full of illustrations to the history of the time, with many quotations from the divine poet; a volume of priceless value to me, copied by my friend from the archives of Venice . . . I know these men, I know them as well as if I had seen them in the flesh! Ha! rare fellows! rare fellows, signore."

The good faith with which the enthusiast spoke, and was evidently so carried away by his admiration of these defunct worthies, to forget for the moment every other subject, called a smile into the face of his auditors, and effectually diverted the channel of conversation from Lamberti.

Nevertheless, later in the evening, when an opportunity offered itself of addressing Mrs. Courteney in a low voice, and without attracting marked attention, Garofalo said, —

"Our friend charged me to deliver a message to you, signore, and one to your daughter, — through you . . . you will comprehend his motives for not bidding you farewell in person. He bade me deliver

those farewells, with his heart-felt prayers for your welfare, and that of the signorina. He was not aware that your own departure was so near at hand."

"When is he going? and will he leave his mother for any length of time?"

"He has had a message from a good friend of ours — a friend of Italy's," — the professor frowned mysteriously; "and he was glad to leave Bologna just at this moment. Important events may arise. I am not at liberty to say more. He may return soon, but it will depend on certain contingencies, and other wills than his own."

As he uttered he last words in that peculiarly hoarse whisper, which is often heard more distinctly than an ordinary conversational tone, Sara Gisborne passed close by. The ribbon of her sleeve caught in the back of the professor's chair; or at least it appeared to do so. The movement was adroitly managed, and it would have been difficult to tell from the expression of her face that she had heard a word that was said.

A few minutes later she sauntered out of the room. No one ever took any notice of her goings and comings, and she knew she was safe from observation.

In the ante-room she flung herself down into a chair, and sobbed. Unnatural as this may appear in one so hard, cruel, and relentless, consistency is, in reality, the only thing which is unnatural in

human nature. The passionate heart of the girl was lashed into a perfect storm at the idea of seeing Guido no more, just now when her plans seemed ripe for execution. A few days — only a few days more; but how much might have been effected in those few days. Forgetful of prudence, forgetful of everything but the frustration of her heart's wild dream, for which she had toiled and plotted so long, Sara determined that he should not depart without her making one last and desperate effort. She would compromise herself — no matter — she would risk that fair fame which was almost her only worldly capital; but what mere worldly considerations, without any stronger support, could restrain her at such a moment?

Whatever was to be done must be done quickly.

She rose, and running to the door which I have already mentioned as connecting the Courteneys' apartments with those occupied by Guido and his mother, she drew back the heavy bolts, and opened it. Upon closing it again, she found herself on the dark staircase. A draught of cold air came up from the open passage below. She stood still and shivered, brushed away the tears that still lay upon her cheek, and tremblingly approached the door she knew to be his, and beneath which a light was shining.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE young advocate was in his room alone, surrounded by the few preparations he was making for his sudden departure. A pile of letters and papers — most of them in cipher — entrusted to his care by some of the liberals of Bologna, for their friends in Milan; a small valise; an engineer's map; and a case of pistols were near him. He had announced his departure to his mother an hour previously, under the pretext of law business, which would detain him at Milan for a few days. The countess received the intelligence in a way that surprised her son. Two days had elapsed since her conversation with the Jesuit father, and she had not yet summoned courage to broach the subject of it to Guido. She now said very little; but in this reticence she seemed to be exercising a great restraint over herself.

"You will come back and spend an hour with me later, *figlio mio*, will you not?"

It appeared as though she were almost anxious to get rid of him for the moment.

Guido had eagerly hastened to obey a summons which might be of importance to his country, and released him for a time at least from a life which had become almost insupportable. His incapacity for application to any of his old studies had in-

creased. Over and over again he sat down, and attacked the subject before him: in a few minutes his thoughts had wandered far away. He was miserable. He felt that so long as he remained under that roof with the Courteneys it was hopeless. The secret missive, with its prospect of very different employment ere long, came like a wholesome tonic, arousing him from despondency, and bracing his relaxed energies. His country wanted him; the deep wound in his life which he knew his own nature too well to believe could ever be *healed*, must not be suffered to eat away all the man's vital force. He had talked of *change*, but the very strength of purpose (whether the principle that guided it were right or wrong), which had made him resist the noblest, as it is the subtlest, temptation to which man is here exposed, denoted a character of iron mould, less susceptible than most things to the influence of time. This love would remain as a shrine whereon to offer up his purest thoughts; a sanctuary wherein to retire from the turmoil and strife of the world. But Guido was a man of action: a man whose sympathies led him to regard it as the first duty of every citizen of the state to be up and stirring in such times; and as the depth of moral degradation to be sunk in indolence and self-indulgence. It was not less a principle, therefore, than a necessity of his nature to work; and work requiring energy, skill, and forethought, was the best medicine now to "minister to a mind diseased."

His preparations were nearly completed. He stood there with folded arms, looking at a little glove that lay on the table before him; and while he yielded to this momentary weakness, his thoughts wandered far, far away from the business of the present hour, and hard practical considerations for the future. . . . He was startled by a low knock at the door, and thrust the glove hurriedly into his breast. Upon his invitation to enter, the door slowly opened, and the figure of Sara Gisborne met his astonished gaze.

"You are going away early to-morrow, Guido Lamberti, and I have come — to wish you good-by."

She spoke in a low tremulous voice, very unlike her usual self; and rapidly, as though not trusting herself to weigh and consider what words she had come there to say.

"You shun any leave-taking with the Courteneys," she went on. "The strength of a man's will is such, that you have rooted up already the boyish passion for a child who was insensible to your love, and will soon be another's. Is it not so? Well, Guido Lamberti, the step I take is without precedent, unwomanly — call it by what name you will; but I am come to tell you there is one who is willing to devote her whole life, nay, to lay it down in your service, Guido Lamberti! A woman, whom you do not love at present, indeed, but whose devotion your heart would recognize in time; a woman

whom it is in your power to mould for good or ill; who would toil and plot for you; whose energies — they are greater than most women's — should be concentrated on the cause you have at heart. She asks for nothing but tolerance at first. She knows you must recover from the wound under which you still suffer, before she can hope for anything more; and — and she would not now, Guido Lamberti, run the risk of exciting your contempt by taking this extraordinary step, but that time presses, and that if they are not now united, fate may divide those two lives for ever!"

"Signorina," said Guido, gravely, taking her hand, "there is not so much love in the world that one can afford to be ungrateful for it! But I will not deceive you. I have no love, nor shall I ever have any, to give in return. How a grave, taciturn man can have won, unwittingly, the affection of so brilliant a woman as yourself, I know not; but your imagination has endowed him, signorina, with qualities he does not possess, I fear. Time and absence will teach you that you were mistaken, and —"

"No, no, Guido!" cried the girl, passionately; "don't talk of time and absence! I cannot continue to live as I am doing. I cannot remain with these people. I have always hated them. I hate them worse than ever *now*. If I am forced back to that life, I shall become desperate — reckless: my bosom seething over with bitterness and disappointment. God knows what I may not do! I hold even now

a secret in my possession which might break off this marriage. But I will not do *that*," she added, while her eyes flashed again. "No! I have a revenge for past wrongs more sure than that."

Guido looked at her in stern surprise.

"Are they not your benefactors of whom you thus speak?"

"No!" she exclaimed fiercely, and her voice had now risen from the murmur in which she began to a pitch far above its ordinary one. "My cry is like that of Esau of old! They have robbed me of my birthright, and now they have robbed me of my blessing — the blessing of your love, Lamberti! I have good cause to hate them!"

"You speak in riddles, signorina, and it is not for me to unravel them. Forgive me if I remind you that a false construction might be placed on your presence here. We live surrounded by spies in this house. Permit me to conduct you back to your own wing of the palace."

"What do I care?" she cried, with a passionate burst of tears; "what do I care for the construction that is put on my presence here? it is the *truth*. I would have sacrificed all, *all* for you! Whatever I become in after life, whatever depth of degradation and self-abasement I may reach, it is owing to *you*, who might have redeemed me, and who abandon me now to all the worst passions in my nature."

While she was yet speaking, the noise of a key in the lock, and of a door turned sharply on its

hinge, made Guido start and look towards the panel which communicated with his mother's room. It flew back, and the countess, pale and feeble, followed by the Jesuit father, stepped into the room.

"The sound of your voices, my son," began the old lady, in quivering accents, "attracted the good padre and me, and we are come here to confirm the hopes we have lately entertained, that you have transferred your affections from the heretic English lady to her whose eyes have been graciously opened by our blessed Virgin to the truth of our holy faith."

It was a lesson she had learned by heart; and she went on, after a frightened, hurried glance at her son's stern face —

"We know your upright heart, so sensitive to the call of honour, my son; and that you would not compromise the fair fame of this lady by remaining closeted with her at this hour, were you not prepared to vindicate her character, as your wife, before the world."

"It is a choice which will cause your friends no disquietude in this world, nor imperil your salvation in the next," chimed in Padre Stefano.

The young man's brow was knit; but a scornful smile played round his mouth. He saw the Jesuit's plot; and turned his piercing eyes upon the girl, to read there how far she was implicated in it before he trusted himself to speak.

She was white, and her fingers twitched nervously, but she returned him gaze for gaze.

"I am innocent of any share in this, Guido Lamberti, so help me God! Reverend father, I appeal to you whether —"

"The appeal is needless, signorina," said Guido, with grave courtesy. "I am quite ready to acquit you of any share in so puerile a plot. My poor mother, had you not submitted to be a tool in this, it would be hardly worth my notice. Out of respect for you, I do not reply to this 'reverend father' as he deserves, by kicking him down-stairs, as I should any other scoundrel whom I caught eavesdropping. But, remember this, if any scandal should arise from this lady's being known to have been here, the scandal is of *your* making, sir; and your cloth, for which I have uncommonly little respect, as you know, will not protect you. What has passed between this young lady and me is a matter which concerns us *alone;* and I submit to no man's interference in such things. Signorina, will you permit me to conduct you back to your own apartments?"

Though in the form of a request, there was really more of command in the words, as he said them, and took the girl's trembling hand in his. What use was there in resistance, even if she could have resisted that strong will? But shame and mortification held her dumb. Without even raising her eyes towards her two advocates, she suffered him to lead her from the room, and across the passage, to

the unbarred door through which she had found her way there. As they now reached it, she seemed to make an effort to speak, but her voice, or the words in which she would have clothed her meaning, failed her. She shrank away from the firm, manly pressure of the hand he once more extended, in bidding her farewell, and with her white face cowering under a tangle of unraveled hair, she fled down the dimly-lit passage, without even looking at him again.

He found his room vacated on his return, and after a few moments' consideration descended to his friend, the professor. He was at his desk as usual, but this time he was writing letters.

"Strange things have been taking place in this house to-night, *amico mio*, but even to you I must not disclose them. I think it better to antedate my departure, however, by a few hours, as that rascally priest may be plotting to try and detain me. Heaven knows what ecclesiastical laws they may not bring to bear on a poor fellow who — well! no matter — but I think I am as well absent from Bologna for a short time. The fact is," he added, with a sorry attempt at a laugh, "they are bent on marrying me to some woman who either is, or affects to be, a pious Catholic, and whom the Jesuits think they can have under their thumb. I ought to be honoured at their bestowing so much notice on me."

"Hè! *caro mio*, your great abilities and your strong character, without the weight of your name,

make you a formidable adversary, and would make you as valuable a friend. . . . But, let me ask, how are you to get away at this hour? There is no diligenza till six o'clock."

"A *carretta* will take me to Modena, where I shall arrive before the early diligenza starts. I will send the porter's boy for one."

While he crossed the court, the professor rose and drew from a leathern bag stuffed into a chink in the wall, five and twenty gold pieces. Ten of these after some hesitation he replaced. He would gladly have given the entire sum, but he dared not part with the whole of those small savings, laid up against a day when he might no longer be able to earn a bajocco. On the count's return, the old man placed the money in his hand.

"Take it without hesitation and without shame," he said, "your funds will be nearly exhausted by this journey; and this is given not to you, but to the cause we both have at heart. I have enough left for any pressing emergency, take it then, *figlio mio*, in God's name, and may He prosper your journey! If the moment be indeed arrived for Italy, if you remain away altogether, who knows but I may pack up my Dante and follow you?"

Guido pressed his old friend's hand in silence. He would not wound him by declining the offer; his pride was of another sort; and he valued that friendship beyond much gold.

"So be it, old friend. We understand each other.

The young man's arm may one day support the failing one. You will hear from me from time to time, and learn how affairs in Lombardy are progressing. If the prospects of our friends there seem visionary, and their hopes in Charles Albert not likely to be realized; if, in short, this movement we are led to expect be one I cannot think myself justified in joining, you will probably see me back here before long. Watch over my poor mother while I am away. Those sharks will leave her no peace. God help her!"

He wrung his friend's hand, and then the two embraced, as Italians are wont to do. Five minutes afterwards he entered his mother's room. He had prepared himself for a violent scene. But as he opened the door his mother's prostrate figure on the bed, and the priest beside her, sent a shock through the son's heart. He rapidly approached her.

"Mother," he began, as he took her passive hand. There was no response, but a low moan, and the closed eyes feebly opened, and rested on the young man.

"Your mother, count, is sick unto death, I fear me, — and alas! my son, you are the cause of this!"

Thus murmured the smooth-tongued Jesuit. But Guido, who had seen the countess more than once before in this condition, recovered his presence of mind, and drawing from his pocket a travelling-flask, he applied it to her lips.

"It is only exhaustion, produced by long fasting, and mortification of the flesh," he said, turning to the priest. "This and the recent agitation you caused her, have brought on this attack. There is a long score between us, padre, beware!"

"You speak a language, my son, I do not understand," returned the priest, with mock humility. "How can a poor man like me have offended you? As a true servant of our holy Church, and in the eternal interests of this excellent lady, I have enjoined certain religious exercises, which —"

"Spare your breath, and keep your defence for those who believe it," interrupted the count's stern voice. "You have starved her, and others like her, that your Order might be enriched, — you would bleed her of her last *bajocco*, in the name of religion, forsooth! Your lies, your frauds, your slander, are they not known to me? And you expect me to become a pious son of the Church, to believe in blinking pictures, and bleeding images! Go to! Mother, are you better? Can you listen to me?"

A faint colour on her lips and cheek showed that the restorative had not been without effect. She faintly signified assent.

"I am called away — as I told you some hours ago, mother: it may be for months — it may be only for a few days. You must bear up, while I am absent; you must not be despondent about me, or suffer others to fill your mind with foolish or evil fancies about me. I go but to do my duty, as I

believe my father would have done; and I will try not to prove myself unworthy of his name. Give me your blessing before I depart, will you not?"

The poor woman writhed upon her bed, and cast a piteous glance towards the priest.

"How can you expect to win a blessing," murmured the latter, "when you desert your mother in what may be her last hour, and disobey her voice, my son?"

It was but a very thin artifice to detain him. Even now Madame Lamberti raised herself with an effort, and cast her arms round her son's neck. The mother's love was too strong for the priest.

"You will go: I know it," she sobbed, "and may the Holy Virgin watch over and lead you back to me! I will not cease to pray for you, my Guido; and, oh! if we do not meet again this side the grave, let us not be separated for ever hereafter!"

"We shall not," replied the young man, solemnly.

She lay locked in his arms; and memories of past years, before a cloud had risen up between them, crowded on those two hearts, pressed together for the last time. And then, not daring to trust himself to speak again, he rushed from the apartment.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Carr had only been in Florence a few hours, when a frantic, incoherent telegram from his mother reached him, imploring him to return to England instantly. This was followed in the due course of post by three letters; one from his father — a weak combination of command and entreaty to his son to break off his marriage, evidently dictated by Lady Carrlyon; one from that lady herself, as foolish and vulgar a composition as was ever committed to paper by an angry mother; and one from the family lawyer, informing the heir of all the Carrlyons of the confused state of his father's affairs, of the necessity of selling or mortgaging a much larger portion of the estate than had been originally contemplated, and lastly of Lord Carrlyon's incapacity to increase his son's allowance in the event of his marriage.

Carr's impatience to place the question of his marriage beyond the pale of further discussion was only stimulated by this means. Ten days of solitary reflection, without opposition, or the necessity for active employment, might perhaps have led to the postponement of his marriage for a time. But ten days busily occupied in surmounting the minor obstacles of detail that often present themselves on

such occasions, and in hurrying on the preparations for the ceremony, with now a fresh incentive to exertion in these irritating despatches from England — why, no fortuitous concurrence of circumstances could be so favourable to the speedy accomplishment of this marriage with a man like Carr!

As his taking his bride to England was of course out of the question at first, when his reception at Carrlyon was sure to be humiliating and painful in the extreme, Carr made up his mind to remain in Italy for the next six months at least. The political horizon was growing more and more overcast every day, but Carr had not lived in intimacy with the Courteneys without imbibing their liberal opinions on the subject of Italy. He regarded the approaching storm with interest, and had no hesitation in deciding to remain in a country which would probably be the scene of a revolution before many months were over. It wanted but a few days to Christmas. Immediately after the marriage he and Gilda were to proceed to Rome, and remain there during the Carnival, returning to Florence in Lent. The summer he proposed spending on the Lake of Como; and before that season was past, the dignified attitude he was to assume would, of course, bring his father and mother to reason. Then, with a lofty amiability, he would yield to their pressing solicitations, and take his fair wife home to be introduced to them. Whether he should consent to remain or no, depended entirely on the good behaviour of his

parents. As he considered the matter over, he derived more and more comfort from the reflection that his wife's moderate income would be sufficient to render him independent of any additional assistance from his father. He felt that this was what lawyers call the "strong point" in his case. And thereupon he wrote a temperate, but firm and manly, reply to his father, in which he regretted that there was any point upon which they should have a difference of opinion, but announced his confidence that Lord Carrlyon's calmer judgment would recognize the impossibility of his son's breaking his engagement, even if he felt so disposed. He moreover laid down the principle — somewhat sententiously, considering the circumstances — of free will unshackled by opinion or prejudice in such cases; and then, with considerable self-satisfaction, he laid down the pen.

A few days later the Courteneys arrived. It was a sharp, glittering day, with the keen Tramontana sweeping down all the streets that were open to the north, and a brilliant sun pouring almost intolerably upon such as lay towards the south, and were sheltered from the mountain wind. In the one, a few pedestrians, like a charge of bulls, drove blindly and furiously along, with heads bent before the wind, and heavy cloaks swathed around their faces. In the other, cloaks were swung back, heads raised, and the pedestrians might not infrequently be seen to sink lazily back against a wall, and

bask, like lizards, in the sunshine. The flower-girls, so notably characteristic of Florence, flaunted here, like butterflies, under the shadow of their large Leghorn hats, flinging their bouquets of choicest exotics into some of the carriages (the carriages, mark, in which there are *only* ladies, go by unnoticed), and bestowing a smile or a sprig of jasmine, out of very exuberance of heart apparently, on every passer-by. Were I disposed to moralize, here would be a fine opportunity for inquiring how many broken hearts have gathered, and tied up, and then given away with a gay and graceful smile, these tuberoses and camelias. There was a sad tragedy when I was in Florence connected with one of these *fioriaje* — but enough of that.

At an hotel upon the Lung' Arno, Laurence Carr took up his quarters; and you may be sure that the handsome, aristocratic-looking young Englishman met with an unusual amount of attention at the hands of the flower-girls. He had secured a large apartment for a few weeks in the adjoining house, as being the warmest situation in the town, for Mr. Courteney, who was to go on to Pisa for the remainder of the winter, as soon as his daughter was married.

As the heavy *vetturino* carriage drove up to the door, and Carr, who was waiting there to receive them, handed out the three ladies, a group of flower-girls pressed round, thrusting their choicest bouquets on him, "per la bella signorina." It takes even less

to gather a knot of idlers together in Italy than elsewhere. The arrival or departure of a travelling carriage never fails to accomplish this. In the crowd congregated about the door as Carr turned casually round, he recognized a face under a broad-leafed hat, which he had last seen in Bologna. His mind, however, was engrossed with too interesting a subject to give this one more attention, and he was certainly far from associating with that muffled stranger the gay Giulio Razzi.

Mr. Courteney retired at once to his room, and as Sara Gisborne sent word that she had a headache, and wished to be left undisturbed, Carr spent the evening alone with the mother and daughter. There was a restlessness, an agitation, about Mrs. Courteney's manner, which did not escape Laurence. Habitually melancholy as was the expression of her face, there was now an increased depression, alternating with a look of alarm, which prompted the young man to inquire, with his usual straightforwardness, if anything was the matter?

"My mother's strength has been over-taxed of late," said Gilda, sadly. "She is far from strong: and all this watching with my father, the excitement of a hurried journey, and of my approaching marriage, have been too much for her. You witnessed, I think," she added, lowering her voice, "one of her nervous attacks? they have been more frequent of late. I look forward, Laurence, so much to having her with us in the summer at Como. Papa says he

is going to remain at Leghorn, but you'll make *her* come, at all events, won't you?"

There was something of her old playfulness in the tone. She was striving with all her strength to *forget* everything else but him; and had, indeed, at times, regained to outward appearance her sweet cheerfulness of manner. This last suggestion, which in the innocence of her heart she thought must give Carr pleasure, was certainly not calculated to do so as much as she imagined. If it was to have been made at all, it should have come from himself. However, he really liked Mrs. Courteney; and though with no uncommon selfishness in man he would have wished that Gilda's attention should be devoted solely to himself for a long time to come, he consoled himself with the reflection that it was a very different thing from having the *father* (with whom he never could feel at his ease) as a visitor for an indefinite period, and he managed to reply, without wincing —

"Certainly, darling, she shall be with us all the summer: only mamma must not engross *all* my Gilda's thoughts, eh? Is there anything, by-the-by, you think your mother would like from England? I am expecting some things to be sent over. What shall I give her, Gilda, as a poor return for the treasure I am robbing her of?"

"Give her, Laurence, what will be worth more to her than anything — a son's affection. Poor mamma! when you know how good, and patient,

and unselfish she is, you will love her almost as much as I do. Tell me," she added, looking up into his face with an expression of earnest inquiry, "have you heard from your own mother and father — since — since we were engaged?"

"I have, dearest. What then?"

"Only that — that I have not heard you speak of them. Will your mother be kind to me, Laurence?"

"I hope so, Gilda; and if not, you may depend on it you shall see very little of her."

That night, when he was gone, and all the house was still, Gilda sat at her open window, looking out into the quiet starlight. Sara and she no longer occupied the same room. Indeed, ever since that evening, now some weeks past, when Sara had so cruelly probed Gilda's heart, a wall of separation, so to speak, had been growing up between the two girls. It may be that an instinct of the heart pointed to the true motives which lay at the bottom of the savage attack that had left Gilda bleeding and shame-stricken; it may have been only the natural repulsion of a pure, guileless nature to a corrupt one, when the depths of passion being stirred, the two souls came closer to one another than, in their daily intercourse, they had yet done. But Sara was outwardly changed lately. She had always been capricious; she was resolutely sullen and abstracted now, whenever she joined the family circle. During the last week of their stay in Bologna, the

Courteneys had in reality seen little or nothing of her. Her change of faith — now openly avowed — was made the plea for long daily absences from home. No one opposed this, and no one thought of questioning her as to where she really went. Mrs. Courteney had never felt that she had any authority over the unruly Creole girl; it was too late to begin now endeavouring to assert it. Moreover, the poor lady's mind was otherwise and painfully engrossed. She had anxiety enough of various kinds, or this might have rendered her more uneasy than it did. As it was, she was glad that her child would soon be separated from Sara. She did not underrate that young lady's abilities, and she felt that it was not improbable the young convert, by-and-by, might have endeavoured to influence Gilda. Though not bigoted in her religious opinions, Mrs. Courteney had clung steadily to the faith of her youth, through many years of wandering in Roman Catholic countries; and she would have regarded it as a heavy calamity had Gilda changed her religion. The mingled feeling of pity, mistrust and admiration, therefore, with which she had always looked on Sara, now gave place to an ill-defined dread. Having invariably treated her with a mother's kindness, it was still impossible she should feel for her anything of a mother's love. Sara, even in her most attractive days, had repelled sympathy. And now that she was harder and more impenetrable than she had ever before shown herself, even in her darkest mo-

ments, Mrs. Courteney's kind heart could only heave a sigh when she thought what early wrong and wretchedness must have poisoned the fountain-springs of that young heart, and turned all its waters to bitterness! Confidence there was none, she knew, between them, and any attempt to bias opinions so resolutely taken, she was well aware would be fruitless. But she made up her mind that, by-and-by, when left alone with Sara, she would set herself patiently to work a change in that obdurate spirit: and in the meantime she was quite as well pleased that the girl's strange fit just now kept her aloof from Gilda, and left mother and daughter generally without the restraint of a third presence.

Gilda Courteney was alone, then, in her room that night. She looked out of the open window, and down upon the rushing Arno, where the lamps of the bridge flashed and quivered, and the black arches beneath were repeated in blocks of liquid shadow. Upon the opposite bank were the dim shapes of church and palace, huge piles of tower and other building darkly defined against the starry night. That bank was unknown ground to her. Her feet had not yet wandered among its intricate streets and *piazze*. And as her eye rested with a vague curiosity upon these outlines of the unexplored city, she felt as though she were looking at her own future. The bridge she was soon to traverse, and which never could be re-crossed, lay before her. The hard, solid bank on which she now stood

would soon be left behind. Already the pleasant landscapes of the past had faded far away. Those blue mountain ranges — a sunny spot upon a lichen-covered wall — a trail of vine against a sunset sky; the pictures, often trivial enough, that are photographed in the memory from some accidental association, they belonged to a time that already seemed far distant. She had reached the bridge. What lay beyond it?

With no such misgiving should a young girl regard her future, when that future is of her own choice and making. Gilda would not have allowed that she felt any misgiving. Yet she questioned what this future had in store for her with an anxious scrutiny. It was no want of confidence in Carr, but in herself. She had accepted him, because it seemed to be universally felt that she ought to do so, and because she had no good reason to give, since he had rejected the only one she offered. That childish passion she firmly believed to be extinct; and, on the other hand, the more she saw of Carr, the more she found to like. If it was possible for her to live as hundreds of other happy women did, entertaining a placid affection for their husbands; why then she *would* be happy. It was her own heart she feared; it was the doubt whether she would be content to exist on a lower range of feeling, having had a glimpse of something higher, and deeper, and stronger.

Oh, inevitable future! future that we build up

for ourselves blindly in the dark, whose faint sky-outline the keen-sighted only may discern, predicting how the rugged walls will shape themselves as we grow near. We are as children that cannot bear the light! We grope on ever to the end; and mercifully ordained is it of the All Wise that our poor human knowledge reaches no farther than the present upon which we stand. To foresee, without the power to avert; who could carry the intolerable burden of such knowledge to the end of a long life?

The girl gazed wistfully at those phantom-outlines opposite, and her thoughts took the direction I have indicated; while she drew her shawl closer round her, and crouched down by the window. To the occasional passers-by in the street below — and they were few at this hour, their footsteps echoing along the pavement in the clear night air, till they died away in the distance, — to such she was invisible. She had put out her candle; the window was a black square. And there she remained, how long she scarcely knew, until her attention was awakened to the sound of footsteps stopping beneath the window.

It was not, however, until the sound of a voice distinctly reached her ear that Gilda started, and leaning forward, endeavoured to discern the speaker. Impossible to see more than two dark figures, apparently a man and a woman, in the door-way below. But that voice? surely she could not be mistaken, low as was the tone in which it spoke.

"Will you be in readiness when I call upon you? and willing to do my bidding, whatever it is? Remember I have warned you, I am something of a tyrant."

"It is a tyranny which is sweet to me, *bell' angiol mio!* But will you in return hold out no prospect of a speedy release from my suspense?

"None; I require to see, to know, more of you than I can in these stealthy interviews. Our acquaintance is of too short standing, Signor Conte, for me to bind myself to anything. But I will not deprive you of all hope: if you can stand the strange whims and caprices of a woman?"

"What is there I would not stand from you, *divina?*"

"If this war breaks out, are you ready to join the army? To gird on your sword, and help to drive out the Austrian? I am aware that you have not been bred to such rude sport, and the scion of a noble house may —"

"*Corpo di Bacco!* you are laughing at me, my angel! Our education may have been neglected; but there are few of us, I hope, who will not be ready to gird on their swords when the good time comes. But if I am to wait till *then* —!"

"You are poor. How do you intend to support a wife? I am extravagant."

"The padre told me what your marriage-portion would be," replied the gentleman, with the utmost

naïveté. "On that, with what I have, we can live like gods!"

"Some of the gods lived uncomfortably enough," laughed the lady; a low mocking laugh. The next moment she exclaimed, "Hush! some one comes down the street. Don't stand there. *Buona notte*."

She pulled the porter's bell, and disappeared through the door. The man walked leisurely away. Gilda listened with a beating heart for several minutes. Was she mistaken? Did that woman belong to some upper floor apartment? The most acute ear could not have caught the sound of a footstep on the stairs. But at length her strained hearing detected the faint creaking of a door cautiously opened in the adjoining room.

And then she doubted no more.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The exertion of travelling produced such an unfavourable change in Mr. Courteney, that it was feared the marriage would have to be postponed. It had been fixed to take place a week after the date of their arrival in Florence. The morning following their arrival he was so exhausted that Mrs. Courteney became seriously alarmed. The physician when he saw him, told her plainly that any strong excitement in his present condition might be fatal. Quiet, perfect quiet, and a milder climate than Florence, were all he could suggest to hold the feeble links of life together.

But on the subject of the marriage, Mr. Courteney was as impatient as Carr could possibly be. He smiled almost contemptuously at the idea of being excited by it, and declared that whether he were able to appear at the ceremony or not, it was to take place on the appointed day.

Gilda had something at her heart which she felt must be told her mother; but that poor worn face seemed pleading so earnestly to have no additional burden cast upon her, every time that Gilda sought to approach the painful subject, that day after day elapsed without her doing so. The swift hours,

nevertheless, moved on with steady pace towards the moment that was to separate her from that tender mother, whose loving embrace she never remembered to have missed a single day since she was born. And as the time drew near, Mrs. Courteney's trouble and agitation of mind became more and more painfully apparent. The effort to appear calm before her husband rendered the strange excitement under which she laboured only more uncontrollable at other moments. Carr remarked upon it to Gilda more than once after that first evening of their arrival, and the poor child heaved a heavy sigh each time.

In spite of the want of sympathy between them, Gilda had found comfort in the recollection that Sara would be left with Mrs. Courteney. That poor mother would at least have the girl whom her kindness had tended like a daughter, as a companion in the dreary days that, Gilda knew well, would follow her own departure. And now, to a young and generous heart, almost the worst feature in Sara's extraordinary conduct was its hard, calculating selfishness. It was evident she cared nothing for the man, whoever he might be; and whether or not she married him, would only make use of him for her own ends. It was the night before her marriage that Gilda nerved herself to repeat to her mother what she had overheard. But Mrs. Courteney's mind was so absorbed in one subject, that none other comparatively could produce much effect upon her. She

and her child wept unrestrainedly in each other's arms that night, as though they felt it might be the last time they would ever be able to do so!

* * * * *

The marriage was over. They were gone. There were only six persons present in the chapel. Carr and his two friends, Gilda with her mother, and Sara. Mr. Courteney was too weak to leave the house. He was wheeled into the room to receive the small party on their return, and to place a magnificent Indian shawl upon the bride's shoulders when she ran up and threw her arms round his neck. That was a sad breakfast that followed! and everyone felt it a relief when the travelling britska which Carr had hired for the journey drove up to the door. And now the last sobbing farewell was given, and they were actually gone. Gone! And in the window, watching them as they drove off, with a very peculiar smile upon her face, stood the figure of a young woman, balancing a letter in her hand. Should she send it, or wait?

Mrs. Courteney's room communicated, as it had done at Bologna, with her husband's. It was necessary to pass through it to reach the latter.

"I desire to speak with Mr. Courteney," said Sara, standing at the door of the first room. The one beyond it was ajar, so that her words, slowly and distinctly uttered, could easily reach the person for whom they were intended.

Mrs. Courteney was in her own room, sitting

with her hands clasped before the picture of that Mother of many sorrows, whose sweet, pitying face seemed to say in all moments of profound depression, "Be of good courage. I too have suffered."

She started to her feet at the sound of Sara's voice, and came hurriedly towards her.

"What is it you want?" she demanded in troubled accents.

"To speak with Mr. Courteney," repeated the girl, more distinctly than before, as she folded her arms and looked the other defiantly in the face.

"He is ill — exhausted; you cannot see him now. What is it, Sara?"

Gilda's words, which subsequent agitation had driven from Mrs. Courteney's mind, now flashed across it. She returned Sara's look with one of sorrowful, questioning wonder.

"My business is with Mr. Courteney," said the girl in the same hard clear voice as before. "If he knows that *I desire to speak with him* on a matter of importance —"

The hand-bell rang sharply from the adjoining room. Sara followed Mrs. Courteney without further invitation to the door.

"Why do you prevent her coming in?" said the voice of the sick man, irritably. "Admit her at once."

Mrs. Courteney stood back to let Sara pass, and the eyes of the two women met once more, as the wife glided out and closed the door behind her.

Why did she shudder under that look, as though stung by a serpent? And why did some irresistible presentiment fasten her to the spot of floor where she stood close to the door, until, trembling, she crouched down there with her head in her hands?

Mr. Courteney was in his chair, propped by pillows. A desk, with several legal-looking documents, was before him. His face was of an ashy whiteness, but the clear pale flame of his eye burnt as intensely as ever, through the gray shadows that had gathered round it.

He looked up at the young woman as she stood there, a few paces from his chair, in her white dress, which she had not yet laid aside after the wedding. He looked up at her, in silence; but with a strange indefinable expression which few, perhaps, had ever seen upon his face. She returned his look without flinching, her arms still resolutely folded.

"Mr. Courteney, I am going to be married. As a dependant on *your bounty*, I came to announce the fact to you."

There was a bitterness and insolence in the tone that did not escape his observation. He bowed his head slightly, and she continued, "Have you no curiosity on the subject?"

"None. You are your own mistress, to do as you please, Miss Gisborne."

"But I am penniless, and I want money. That is why I come to you. Shall I further tell you by what right I ask it?"

He remained silent. The hand in which he held a paper trembled. He laid it on the table. "Proceed," he said, after a pause.

"It is a right you will not deny, when I invoke the name of Sara Morny."

He raised his wasted hand, and wiped the damp from his brow. This, and a nervous contortion of the mouth, were the only evidences of any extraordinary emotion.

"It is a right I *do* deny;" his voice was low but steady. "That name should have no influence on me."

"It is the name of one you foully wronged," said the girl, with flashing eyes. "The curse that fell upon you and yours from her dying lips yet rings in my ears. I swore never to rest till I had found you — and I have done so. The curse has already taken effect! Yes! Henry Dunstanly, under your assumed name, through all the changes of time and circumstance, chance has helped me to discover the secret hid from the whole world — ay! *from your own wife!* I now know what prompted you to take me into your house as something better than a servant, when you found me starving in Genoa, a year ago! It was no generous pity; it was the stinging voice of remorse! You knew *me* — you recognized your child, abandoned twenty-four years ago, by the likeness to her mother. You thought I should never discover *you*. It was a cheap way of being quit with conscience! But did it never occur to you that the

blood of Sara Morny flowed in the veins of this girl? That vengeance was her inheritance? That sooner or later it would track you out? It was a dangerous experiment making the offcast child an inmate of your house. Walls have ears, and my careful education has not led me to be above eavesdropping, father!"

She laughed scornfully —

"What is it you mean? and what is it you want?" gasped Mr. Courteney.

"I mean," she replied slowly, "that the *other secret of your life* is equally known to me, and I am here to make use of both. You are in my power, Mr. Dunstanly."

He had leant forward in his eagerness, and now fell back, while a ghastly shade passed over his face. He tried to speak, but could not. The girl lifted the strong stimulant which was on the table to his lips. It was horrible to see the act of apparent mercy performed with that ruthless expression on her face!

"Why do you come to me at the eleventh hour when the sand of my life is just run out?" he gasped faintly. "Why have you waited to say all this until now?"

A devilish smile crossed her lips.

"I have bided my time. I waited till Gilda was married, the thing accomplished beyond recall! Your intellect is still acute enough to seize all the importance of that fact for me? By a word this mar-

riage might have been broken off; and neither of the parties much the worse. How different is the case now! the honour of a noble house is concerned: you apprehend my meaning?"

The dying man set his teeth hard.

"What object do you propose to attain by this course?" he murmured in a hoarse voice. "Your fancied vengeance will not reach *me* by any disclosure now. I shall be beyond it. If it is only money you want, spare your threats, girl. There is a suitable provision made for you in these instructions which I leave my wife. This provision will place you beyond want." He took a paper from the table. "I leave no will: for the name I die bearing, and which my wife will bear after me, has no legal value, as you have discovered; I have therefore sold all my property out of the funds, and divided it into two equal shares. Out of my wife's portion, while she lives, will be paid you an annuity of two hundred pounds, and five thousand pounds at her death."

"Your *other* child receives something like fifteen thousand pounds now and as much more when her mother dies, I suppose? Adversity, you see, has made me practical, and I have learnt by starvation the value of money; I do not mean to starve again. Mrs. Laurence Carr has made a great marriage, rank and future wealth: she has less need of your money, and far less *right* to it than I have. I de-

mand that you divide her fortune equally with me."

When he answered it was with great difficulty, but clearly, resolutely; stopping every now and then to gather breath, but never from any indecision of purpose.

"What you ask is impossible. My daughter's fortune is already paid to her husband; I have told you, I do not recognize your right to demand anything of me. I was young when I loved your mother with all the fierceness of a first passion. She was many years older, and her nature was corrupt. She very nearly ruined me, for I would have given her all I possessed on earth. But that was little compared with the *other* injury. I trusted her, and she *deceived* me. The discovery of her treachery froze my whole nature, and it has never thawed: when I loved again, it was a better woman, and I suffered and sinned too, for *her* sake; but I was then a hardened man of the world. I was no longer capable of the devotion I had wasted on your mother: I had lost my faith in woman, and I looked on *success* in love as the legitimate prize of the persevering and adroit. You have seen me cold, cynical — I have grown more and more so every year; but this it was your mother first made me. What I do for you is in expiation of my sins, and in pity for your position. But *claim* on me, you have none."

The thunder cloud that had been gathering on

Sara's brow during the above speech, burst out in uncontrollable fury.

"You do wisely to insult my mother's memory at this moment! Coward! She died in abject misery, leaving me, a child, to the care of strangers, with no other inheritance than her revenge; while you — you, with a fresh crime upon your head, were revelling in wealth, and —"

"I swear," interrupted the dying man, "that she never communicated with me, after I discovered her falseness and broke with her. Had she ever let me know she was in want —"

"Fine words!" scoffed Sara. "Fine words now that she is dead and gone! But they will not make me turn back from my purpose. Ha! you have shrunk from publicity these eighteen years past; your name shall be publicly branded now. You shall live long enough to see those you love best suffer through you: that *virtuous* wife and daughter — I have another account to settle with the latter — they shall be brought to shame and dishonour, and thus —"

The dying man bounded up in his chair. He seemed possessed by some agent, independent of his own feeble strength, and beyond his control. His bony fingers grasped the girl by the throat so suddenly, that the veins started out on her forehead before she had time to step back and seize his wrists. For a second they stood thus — father and child —

if, indeed, they were so, locked in a death-struggle, face to face.

It was a sight for fiends to witness, and rejoice over.

But death was already relaxing the fingers that had closed round the girl's throat. That momentary strength was spent, the flame that leapt in the socket had already died down, and he rolled back heavily upon the bed.

The door at the same instant was burst open and the unhappy wife, rushing in, threw herself on her knees beside her husband, and buried her head in her hands.

"Henry! Courteney! I have heard all. No matter, dear, what becomes of *me*, I cannot long survive you; let her have what she wants, my money, *everything*, only, for God's sake! spare my child! Spare her this misery, this disgrace *now*. You would not hearken to me before, Courteney, when there was time to avert this misery. Oh, husband! as a last request, I implore you, leave us not to this creature's mercy! speak to me, promise me — make her swear —"

Suddenly a horrible suspicion flashed through her mind, and starting up, she brushed back the damp gray hair from his brow, with her quivering hand, exclaiming wildly, as she pressed her face close to his, —

"Look up! Look up! Speak to me once more!

only once — Henry! Oh, my God! he is dead, and without a word!"

She gave a low, helpless cry, like a wounded bird, and fell forwards insensible upon the body.

* * * * *

The Creole girl stood there, immovable and pitiless as a Greek Fate over her victims.

"Foiled by death?" she muttered to herself, "No!" Her eye rested at that moment on the papers that lay scattered over the table before her. She swept them up into a heap, and carried them leisurely to her own room, before calling Marietta to Mrs. Courteney's assistance.

CHAPTER XXV.

"DEAR SIR,

"I HAVE the painful task of announcing to you the death of Mr. Courteney, which took place a few hours after your departure yesterday; and, in pursuance of the customs of this country, he was buried to-day.

"Mrs. Courteney has remained in a sort of stupor ever since her husband's death, unconscious of what passes around her; so that I have taken upon myself the necessary arrangements, and shall remain here until Mrs. Courteney is able to discuss a small matter of business between us. Were it not for this untoward event, I should no longer be an inmate of this house, as I had communicated to Mr. Courteney before he died the fact of my immediate removal from his protection. It is probable, therefore, that on your return here, where your generous sympathy will doubtless lead you at once, I shall no longer be in Florence.

"It may be as well to mention, which I do with regret, that I have reason to fear Mr. Courteney has left his widow but poorly off — trusting, no doubt, to your kind and liberal sympathy for her support. Until you take measures for the same, the English

apothecary (whose letter corroborating these statements I enclose) will generously attend on, and provide for your respected mother-in-law; and should you not see fit to make the necessary provision, which, after all, cannot be *expected* of you, the hospitals of Florence, I believe, are good.

"May I request the favour of your communicating this sad intelligence to Mrs. Carr? and, with the expression of my regard and esteem for yourself, believe me,

"Truly yours,

"SARA GISBORNE.

"*To the Hon. Laurence Carr.*"

The following was enclosed: —

"SIR,

"I WAS called in yesterday evening to see the body of Mr. Courteney. I found life had been extinct upwards of half-an-hour. Of his death from natural causes there can be no doubt, as his appearance confirmed all I knew before of his state of health. I regret to add that Mrs. Courteney's frame sustained so severe a shock in this sudden bereavement, that she has not yet recovered her consciousness, and is in a condition requiring the utmost care and attention: that with these she will recover — slowly but surely — I have no doubt. Unfortunately, the very admirable nurse she now has — a young lady whose exertions and fortitude throughout these trying scenes have been beyond praise — in-

forms me that she will be under the painful necessity of leaving Florence in the course of a few days. Under these circumstances, sir, while I beg to assure you that Mrs. Courteney shall want for no attention at my hands, you will no doubt see the importance of her having some relative or friend near her. Awaiting your wishes, I have the honour to be, sir, "Yours faithfully,

"THOS. SARGENT."

"P.S. — I open this to say that the clergyman and I together have locked up, and set our seals upon all documents we have found belonging to the deceased."

Carr sat at breakfast in the Hôtel de l'Europe the morning after his arrival in Rome, when the above letters were handed to him by Giuseppe. Opposite him was his wife, fair and gentle creature, unsuspicious of all the sorrow that cover contained for her. The morning sun streamed in through the window at her back, kindling the outline of her soft brown hair into a natural glory of gold: it tipped with snow the edges of the white lace collar, and silvered the folds of her gray silk dress, that stood up sharply against the light. Carr looked at her, as her eye ran listlessly down the columns of *Galignani*, and a pang shot through his heart at the thought of disturbing that picture of fair serenity with the cruel news he had to break.

Men are greater cowards than women at such moments. Carr would have given a great deal to be able to defer the evil hour; but he dared not. He knew it was necessary to prepare her, since it was clear at a glance that they must return at once to Florence. The death of Gilda's father could not be said to affect him otherwise than with an unacknowledged sense of relief. The account of Mrs. Courteney, however, filled him with honest sorrow; and he felt, very properly, that Gilda's place was by her mother's bed-side.

It was a great bore, of course, leaving Rome the day after one's arrival there, and the fourth of one's honeymoon, without having seen anything of the Eternal City! But, to his honour be it said, if this selfish regret flashed not unnaturally through Carr's mind as he sat there, it was quickly driven out by the image of that desolate and widowed lady, tended by strangers in her bed of sickness and, yearning for her child. He never hesitated an instant as to the obligation of returning to her as fast as four horses could carry them: his only hesitation arose from his desire to spare Gilda as much anxiety as possible.

He read Sara's letter twice — three times before he could make up his mind to speak. The strange form of that communication — the almost studied heartlessness, with its thin crust of cold politeness, coming from one who was under such obligations to Mrs. Courteney, could not fail to strike Carr with

surprise and disgust. It also rendered his breaking the news to Gilda more difficult, since it was impossible to give her the letter itself to read. Even Mr. Sargent's might alarm her unnecessarily as to her mother's state. He must make some excuse for keeping both from her, and soften the blow as much as might be, omitting all details. As to the supposition of Mrs. Courteney's being left destitute, he did not entertain it for a moment. The deceased had scrupulously fulfilled his promises to Carr. The interest of the fifteen thousand settled on his wife had been placed to Carr's credit at his banker's the day before his marriage. It was not to be believed, therefore, that the widow's portion had not been secured with the same rigid exactitude. It struck Carr — not indeed at the moment, but later — as singular, that any one should pretend to be acquainted with Mrs. Courteney's pecuniary position, since she had herself remained unconscious after her husband's death, and his papers were under lock and seal. As he revolved at his leisure the strange tenor of that letter, and asked himself what it might mean, he was also forcibly struck and puzzled by the cordial expressions — one would almost say of commiseration — towards himself, — a comparative stranger to the writer, — with which it closed, without so much as a word of sympathy to his wife!

But this critical examination of Miss Gisborne's composition, as I have said, came later, and when

he was alone. The disagreeable impression it left generally on his mind was all he now knew. He folded it up carefully with the doctor's letter, and put it in his pocket.

She bore the news better than he expected. Her father's health had been such that she was familiarized with the idea of his probable death, and his increased weakness of late had additionally prepared her. She felt the natural grief of a young heart, when the first vacancy occurs in its narrow circle: him to whom she had hitherto looked for guidance, and knowledge, and advice she should behold no more. It cannot be said that he had endeared himself very strongly by any inward sympathy or outward demonstration to his daughter; but he was the law that governed and bound up that small household: his learning was held to be inexhaustible; his opinions and decrees knew no change. The influence of a powerful will and large, clear intellect had been felt thus by Gilda from a very early age. The loss to her was one which she knew could not be replaced. And to her poor mother — she dreaded to think of her!

Four hours later they were on the road back again to Florence. Throughout that melancholy journey, which they performed as rapidly as four horses could carry them, with an occasional halt of an hour only, her husband's tenderness for her sorrow, his patient efforts to soothe and comfort her, touched Gilda profoundly; and the gentle pressure

of her hand, as it lay within his, repaid Carr for all. It was a spontaneous movement which told that the young wife's heart was not insensible to the sacrifices he was making. Now Carr was one of those heroes capable of making sacrifices for a continuance, only when they are acknowledged.

They arrived at Florence very late in the following day. On driving up to Mrs. Courteney's, Carr was almost as much relieved as Gilda to hear that her mother was conscious, and out of danger. He was beginning to be afraid that he had not sufficiently prepared her for the state in which he expected to find Mrs. Courteney. She was sitting up, and received them with a calm which seemed almost unnatural. She looked wan and weak, though fragments of letters and papers around her gave evidence that she had already roused herself to one of the most painful tasks consequent on death. To Carr it appeared as though, after the long tension of her nervous system, a reaction had taken place; that she had gone through too much to feel any longer acutely. After the severe shock, her mind was dulled to suffering, he believed; and was stunned, much as her frame was shattered, by the blow. Perhaps he was right. That a great change had come over her was certain. Was it the calm of resignation? Let us glance back at her a few hours previously and see.

When the Carrs arrived, it was seven o'clock. They learnt that at five Sara Gisborne had taken

her departure. She had made her calculations with exactitude, and managed to have arranged her "matters of business" with Mrs. Courteney, just before it was possible for the Carrs to reach Florence.

"You are now sufficiently recovered, madam," said the exemplary young person of whom Mr. Sargent spoke in such warm praise, as she entered Mrs. Courteney's room with some papers in her hand. "You are now sufficiently recovered to discuss business with me. Before we do so, and that I take my leave, may I beg that you will not forget to tell Mr. Laurence Carr that I nursed you carefully for five days and nights."

"Thank you, Sara," said Mrs. Courteney, gently.

"Perhaps your memory does not serve you accurately as to the events immediately preceding Mr. Courteney's — we will still *call* him Courteney —'s death? You then, with a just appreciation of my position, wished to make any sacrifice in order that my demands might be complied with. Are you still of the same mind, madam?"

"I am," she murmured.

"Here are certain coupons, bonds, and railway shares, amounting in all to nine thousand, eight hundred and fifty pounds, which it needs but a scratch of your pen to transfer from your name to mine. This will be a simpler method of carrying out Mr. Courteney's wishes, than your paying me the annuity of four hundred pounds, he proposed, and is slightly to your advantage, moreover."

"I understood," faltered Mrs. Courteney, "that — that it was *two* hundred pounds?"

"Your memory, as I expected, is at fault! No wonder! These lines, in Mr. Courteney's own hand, will serve to refresh it. Pray show the paper to Mr. Laurence Carr if he should make inquiries on the subject — that he may see you are only carrying out your late husband's wishes."

The paper she handed was indeed in the deceased gentleman's handwriting. It was a slight memorandum, intended for his wife, and penned a few hours before his death. After some minor injunctions and recommendations, it directed that the interest of ten thousand pounds should be paid annually to the "young person calling herself at present Sara Gisborne," and that sum devised to her upon Mrs. Courteney's death. It was altogether an informal document, hastily written, and intended only for his wife; when Sara's hand swept it, with the rest of the papers, from the table. One expert at discovering such frauds might have detected that a figure 1 had since that time been inserted, and a 5 adroitly converted into an 0: but to the uninitiated, this was imperceptible, even on the closest inspection.

Mrs. Courteney was no fool. She had a conviction that her husband never intended what purported there to be his written intention. She knew him too well: even if her ears and her memory could have deceived her in the memorable interview she had overheard. Yet she took the paper passively, with-

out questioning its authenticity. It *was* undoubtedly in his handwriting, and that was enough for her. Sick and weak, her brain troubled by one harassing doubt and anxiety, she felt herself relieved thus of a heavy responsibility. The gift of two thirds of her fortune would reduce her to penury, but if she purchased tranquillity for her child at this price, was not the bargain a cheap one? For herself, no one so indifferent to poverty — more so than ever at that moment, when all her worn and weary heart asked for was *rest*.

She took the pen in her trembling fingers, but ere signing the first deed which Sara placed before her, she paused and looked up, her eyes filled with tears.

"Sara, I have never done you any harm; or, if I have, it was unintentional. I would have loved you, if you had allowed me, but you would not. Your animosity for real or fancied wrongs has been bitter. Say that it is wiped out, before I sign this; that you will not visit it upon the innocent and unoffending."

"To you individually, madam," said Sara, carelessly, "I have never had any particular animosity. And, at all events, your just restitution of a portion of that fortune which should have been my mother's, will clear off the score between us."

"And my child, Gilda? You understand me."

"If Mrs. Laurence Carr does not cross my path, I shall leave her at peace. If my plans are not

thwarted, you and she are safe, madam, and will never hear of me again, which is, no doubt, what you devoutly hope. This I will swear to you, if you wish it."

"It is enough," said Mrs. Courteney, as she signed her name. "If your mind were not so jaundiced, my poor girl, you would know that we neither of us *have* ever thwarted, or could desire to thwart, your views; and that, far from not wishing to hear of you, we should like to know that your married life was better, and calmer, and happier, than your girlhood has been. God help us all, Sara! This is a difficult world. I am the last woman that should be hard on another. God forgive us both!"

A momentary softness stole into the hard black eyes of the Creole girl, as she listened to those tender and womanly words. But she crushed it out and stamped on it at once. No relaxation of resolve for her! What had she to do now with human sympathy? Passion and ambition; all else had died and been buried in her mother's grave.

She gathered up the papers without reply; and while Mrs. Courteney sank back on the pillow, exhausted with the exertion of talking and writing, Sara left the room.

Half an hour later, she returned to wish her good-by. It was an ordinary act of courtesy, performed in the most ordinary way. She declined to give her address; to state where she was going, or

by what name she was henceforward to be known. She left a polite message for Mr. Laurence Carr, with a short note.

And thus the two women parted, never to meet again in this world.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Two days elapsed. Mrs. Courteney gained strength rapidly. On the third morning she was able to leave her room, and take her place on the sofa in the *sala*. Carr happened to be alone there, and was glad of the opportunity of speaking to his mother-in-law without the presence of his wife. To say the truth, he was not altogether in the most equable state of mind. Gilda had confided to him with tears in her eye that morning that her mother was going to send away all her servants: her reduced means would not admit of her keeping them. Carr himself had not been called upon to investigate the state of Mr. Courteney's affairs; the seals had been broken, and every paper examined by the widow herself. He now felt an uncomfortable suspicion that Miss Gisborne's information was correct. Her last note consisted of these words, —

"I LEAVE Mrs. Courteney, dear sir, with no anxiety as to her health. As to her future comfort and well-being, were you not at hand to see that they suffer no reduction from her change of fortunes, I should be indeed unhappy. But however

tried and deceived, your generosity will succour her, I am persuaded.

"Faithfully yours,

"S. G."

Carr knew no more what to make of this letter than the first. He had questioned Mrs. Courteney, and then Gilda, more particularly as to the writer. From the latter the account he received was unsatisfactory enough, and she spoke of Sara with a severity very unlike Gilda in general. Mrs. Courteney was more vague and more lenient in her manner. She mentioned Sara's unremitting attention during her own illness; but the subject was evidently painful to her, and she avoided it as much as possible.

Carr was annoyed and puzzled by the tone of these notes. The half-pity they seemed to express for him was especially irritating; and since this intelligence of his wife's, he resolved to broach the subject boldly to Mrs. Courteney, and learn the actual truth.

"I fear, from what Gilda tells me," he began, "that your husband's affairs have been left in some disorder. Will you let me assist you in looking over and arranging his papers?"

"Thank you, Laurence," she answered gently. "They are in perfect order. You are aware that Mr. Courteney left no will. He told you so, I believe, when he divided his fortune? His only in-

structions are contained on a slip of paper, addressed to me."

"But — but, since you have, by this division, between five and six hundred a year, why, let me ask, should it be necessary for you to reduce, so suddenly, your establishment?"

"It *is* necessary — no matter why — but you need not pity me. My plans are already arranged. There is an Italian lady living at Forli, whom I know well. I shall go to her. Those quiet towns where strangers seldom pass, and never reside, are very cheap, and to me one place is the same as another."

"Mrs. Courteney," said Carr, rather heatedly, "do you not place enough confindence in me to say candidly what this drain upon your income is, that reduces you from comparative affluence to poverty?"

"It is from no want of confidence in you that I shrink from the subject, Laurence; but, because it is a painful as well as a useless one to discuss. In a word, more than half the fortune you suppose me to possess, is already in the hands of another person. This person had a strong claim on Mr. Courteney; there is the paper he left — read it. Ask me no more questions — the thing is done beyond recall; and if you would oblige me, never allude again to the subject."

He took the paper and read it with amazement, strongly mingled, it must be confessed, with indignation. It was hardly credible that Mr. Courteney

should have left his wife thus burdened and impoverished! And what was the tie strong enough to induce him to act thus? Ay, what! The more he thought of it, the more mysterious and difficult to believe it seemed. Yet *there* was the document in his own handwriting; and there was his widow acknowledging and acting upon the same. It was outrageous!

Then he began to think how he was personally affected by this discovery, and made out for himself a strong case of grievance. He considered himself *done*. Of course it was impossible he could leave his wife's mother in abject poverty — the dead man had calculated on that. It is true the promised dowry had been punctually paid; but instead of complete independence, here he found himself saddled with a very heavy charge! He forgot, as men often do under like circumstances, how often and how strongly he had deprecated the idea of being influenced by his wife's money, and how he had requested that it might be settled entirely on herself, and placed beyond his control.

Had this been recalled to his mind, and the manifest inconsistency of his present complaint pointed out, it is not improbable that Carr would have intrenched himself behind a whole barrier of specious arguments to prove that he was not called upon in any way to spend his wife's money upon his wife's mother. Fortunately, all his better feelings were allowed to have full play. There was no one

to advise him to do the right thing. His irritation had time to cool down.

"E un' arma spesso il non averne,"

says an Italian poet. There sat the widow, pale and helpless in her weeds, opposite, asking nothing of him, but, on the contrary, accepting her poverty with a simple dignity and self-respect that could not fail to touch Carr at last. He recognized in her very reserve which had angered him, that instinct of delicacy which shrank from making her position known to her son-in-law.

After the lapse of a few minutes, he went up, and held out both hands.

"Your home must be with us for the present, Mrs. Courteney. When we leave Italy — Gilda and I — we will talk more about your future residence. Until then you must make up your mind to live in our tent, wherever it may be pitched. I will hear nothing. I will take no excuse! Gilda's happiness would be destroyed, if she knew you were living in solitude and misery at a wretched little place like Forli. I could not allow it. I am clothed in a little brief authority, you see, as your daughter's husband, and I choose to exercise it. As to this memorandum," he added, in a graver tone, "I accept it for what you say it is — the expression of Mr. Courteney's last wishes. I forbear to make any comment, or to ask any question on the subject. I shall endeavour to forget it from this moment, and only wish

the provisions of it were such as to enable *you* to do so."

Carr could say and do things too, you perceive, in the true and chivalrous spirit of a gentleman. Pity that the many small defects that had gathered on his character, like an accumulation of fine dust on machinery, so often impeded the action of its wheels.

Mrs. Courteney's eyes filled with tears, and she pressed Carr's hand warmly: but she remained firm for a long time to her original intention. It needed all Gilda's entreaties, and Carr's persuasive arguments — reiterated with additional force for several days — to induce her to abandon it. But the more she resisted, the more resolved Carr was to carry through his magnanimous intentions. She had to yield finally against her *instincts*, rather than her judgment; for after all, was it not a natural and obvious course? Her daughter's husband was disposed to treat her as a mother; why should she estrange herself from them? She knew how Gilda loved her, and she determined, with the rare wisdom of experience, to influence her child as little as possible; to live as much within herself as might be, and never to stand between husband and wife. If, after this, she detected the smallest shade of discord arise, which might be traced to her presence, she was resolved that nothing should induce her to remain. Yet even when these rules of action were laid down, her dead husband's advice recurred to

her over and over again, with painful, cruel distinctness. Were it not wiser to make the wrench at once and for ever, that must sooner or later separate her from her child?

It may be supposed that Carr was anxious to know what tone his father and mother would now adopt towards him; and, in truth, he was all the more so, that he did not write, and said nothing on the subject to any one. After his marriage he had written one brief letter announcing the fact, and then followed a long silence on either side. Circumstances, in the meantime, were favouring him; the complication of Lord Carrlyon's affairs was serious, and without more energy and resolution than the old man possessed, it was difficult to right them. Carr's unfortunate marriage at this juncture (instead of allying himself with "money," as of course he ought to have done) was to be bitterly deplored; but in any sort of rupture with his son, or open expression of his displeasure when Carr's signature was so necessary to him, Lord Carrlyon could not have indulged, even had he felt so inclined. Poor hampered, harassed old man! what with his lawyers, and creditors, and overbearing wife, he had a hard time of it just then. Lady Carrlyon it was who prevented his writing at once to their delinquent son. She had a violent bilious attack, brought on by her rage at the frustration of all her most cherished schemes, and in her impotent wrath, forbade Lord Carrlyon from answering the prodigal's

letter. But as the bilious attack passed away, and a *mens sana in corpore sano* returned to the worldly-wise woman, a conviction of the utter futility of this line of conduct grew on her. If anything could redeem her Laurence — could retrieve the past — it must be done by other means, and not just at present. Wait till the first fever of passion is past — till reason has resumed her sway: then who knows but some flaw, some informality, may be found in this disgraceful marriage, contracted with such suspicious haste? So whispered prudence; and the proud woman gnawed her heart-strings, and wrote to her son. Unlike her more unpremeditated effusions, it was an astute composition, in which mild sorrowful surprise yielded to the loving mother's hope that, as the step was taken, it might conduce to her son's happiness. This letter was accompanied by one from his father, saying very little about the marriage, and a great deal about the Carrlyon estate.

The packet reached Carr at Florence soon after the interview I have recorded with Mrs. Courteney, and about a month after his marriage. It made him very happy, and Gilda observed that the cloud which had hung over his brow more than once of late, was completely dispelled this morning.

"Shall we spend next winter at Carrlyon, Gilda?" he asked, as he stooped over her chair and kissed her forehead.

A number of contending feelings made tumult in

the young wife's breast, but she replied with her sweet smile, while the colour rose to her cheeks, —

"Oh, yes; if *they* wish it, Laurence, by all means let us go."

In truth, she had grown not unnaturally to think of Carr's home and his parents with something like dread. The few words that had dropped from her husband now and then had not been reassuring: the absence of all communication with his family seemed strangely cold to the warm-hearted girl, and when speaking of it to her mother, the latter prepared her to expect anything but a cordial welcome from the house of Carrlyon.

"But," added Mrs. Courteney, "a husband and wife must be all in all to each other; and if Laurence is sincerely attached to you, as I believe him to be, and you continue as happy together as you are now, dearest child, no matter what happens. All the world besides is of no moment compared with *that*."

Yes, he was sincerely attached to her; there was no doubt of it. This was not a mere passing fancy, which wore away with possession. But, remembering the circumstances under which he was accepted, it may be asked, was he contented with the amount of affection it was in his wife's power to bestow on him in return? He was naturally of a jealous temperament: the proverbial staring of Italians incensed him beyond measure; and he was near horse-whipping a young artist, who, attracted by the fair hair and sweet young English face, ventured to request

that she would sit to him, as Gilda stood watching him copy in the gallery one day.

The recollection of Guido Lamberti was put away from him as far as possible. They never spoke, and never heard of the young Bolognese. His name by tacit consent was avoided in the small family circle, for it was but natural to imagine that it was not a very agreeable one to Laurence Carr. He could not bear to think that Gilda had ever loved the Italian. In fact, whenever he thought on the subject, he declared it was not the case: it was but a girlish fancy which sentimentality had exaggerated into a passion. Yet, with a very common inconsistency, he was jealously on the look-out for any symptom that should indicate the existence of such passion still.

For the present it is necessary to say but little of the state of Gilda's own heart. These were early days. She was very grateful for her husband's devotion, and his tenderness to her mother; very anxious to please him, and for the rest tranquil and passive. The seeds were sown, no doubt, of that affection whose growth, like moss, is unperceived. Alas! like moss, too, it never would do more than cover the *surface* of her being. The passion-flowers within had been torn up ere they had come to maturity, and trampled under foot. When she thought of Lamberti, it was as of something long since passed away, belonging to another period of existence. The idle dreams of that time had fled for ever. Feelings of an unlike character were growing up daily stronger

in her now; and she strove with all her heart to shut out idle retrospection.

That handsome young couple in deep mourning attracted, indeed, universal attention. They were daily to be seen sauntering through the Uffizi or Pitti Palace, and on sunny afternoons driving to one or other of the princely villas that surround Florence. Sometimes Mrs. Courteney accompanied them; but she was always ready with an excuse to leave them together, and anxious that they should be dependent on each other's society alone.

Except two or three of the young men belonging to the embassy, they knew no one, and Carr, in his present frame of mind, was not anxious to encourage the visits of these acquaintances. His wife's deep mourning was sufficient plea for the reclusive life they led, and Carr at once declined any intercourse with the few English who, undismayed by the signs of coming tempest, lingered in Florence.

The carnival was over. The customary boisterous merriment of maskers had struggled under an ominous gloom, and the low thunder in the distance had made itself heard through the sound of tabret and dulcimer. And now, on the other hand, the sackcloth and ashes of Lent scarcely suited the fiercely excited temper of the Tuscan capital. Fair Florentine dames, whose morality sat lightly on them during ten months in the year, and who, in the ordinary course of things, retired to convents, and were busy making their salvation at this season, were now in a fever of patrio-

tic excitement. On the 17th of February the Tuscan constitution was promulgated, and the anomaly of an Austrian liberal grand-duke was presented to the world. This was only a link in the chain of reaction which was being rapidly passed from city to city throughout the peninsula. Terror-stricken *Bomba* — after the Sicilian revolution, where his merciless cannonadings earned him the name by which he will be handed down to posterity, — King Bomba in his abject terror, promising anything and everything to his revolted Neapolitans, was a spectacle at which all Italy rejoiced. Every day news arrived of some fresh demonstration of popular feeling in the cities writhing under Austrian rule. From Milan it was an address circulated among the youths of all classes, inviting the population to follow the example of the Americans, who abolished the use of tea in order to avoid paying the tax to England. "Give up tobacco, and all voluntary taxation," was the exhortation of the Milanese patriots. From Venice it was the deliverance of Daniel Manin and Tommasso from prison by the hands of the people, and the cry of "Morte ai Tedeschi!" The overthrow of the Orleans dynasty in France, — insurrection at Vienna, — a Roman constitution granted by Pio Nono, — intelligence of these and other moves rapidly following each other on the great political chess-board, kept Florence in a ferment.

If Carr had ever been a luke-warm liberal, he at all events now heartily adopted his wife's politics,

and was sanguine for the emancipation of Italy. They lingered on in Florence until the spring should have fully burst, and they should be driven northwards to seek shelter from the heat. Every evening during this time he sauntered into the Café Doni, and mingled with one of the knots of free-spoken republicans, who were discussing the news of the day. The latest rumours current were thus brought back to the tea-table, where mother and daughter anxiously awaited his return.

At last the long-gathering thunder burst. On the 18th of March the great revolt of Milan broke out, and five days later Radetzki and the Austrian garrison were compelled to retire.

And here it is necessary that we should turn aside for a space, to consider what had become, meantime, of the other actors in this story.

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